RITUALS OF ISLAMIC MONARCHY

ACCESSION AND SUCCESSION IN THE FIRST MUSLIM EMPIRE

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ANDREW MARSHAM

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To Farrhat

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NOTE ON CONVENTIONS

Translations are my own except where a specific one is cited. The exception is the Qurʾān, where I have often adapted – sometimes quite freely – Abd Allah Yusuf Ali's 1938 translation. Arabic is transliterated as in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Some place names are transliterated, but place names familiar in English are given their usual English spelling (for example, Medina, Baghdad). For reasons of clarity, consistency and convention, dating throughout is according to the Christian Era. When the Islamic lunar *hijrī* dates are also given they usually appear in the format 72/691–2. Short references to the sources and secondary scholarship upon which I have depended appear as endnotes at the end of each chapter. Full bibliographic details are found in the Bibliography, preceded by the list of abbreviations.

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Map 1 Map of the late antique and early Islamic Near East.

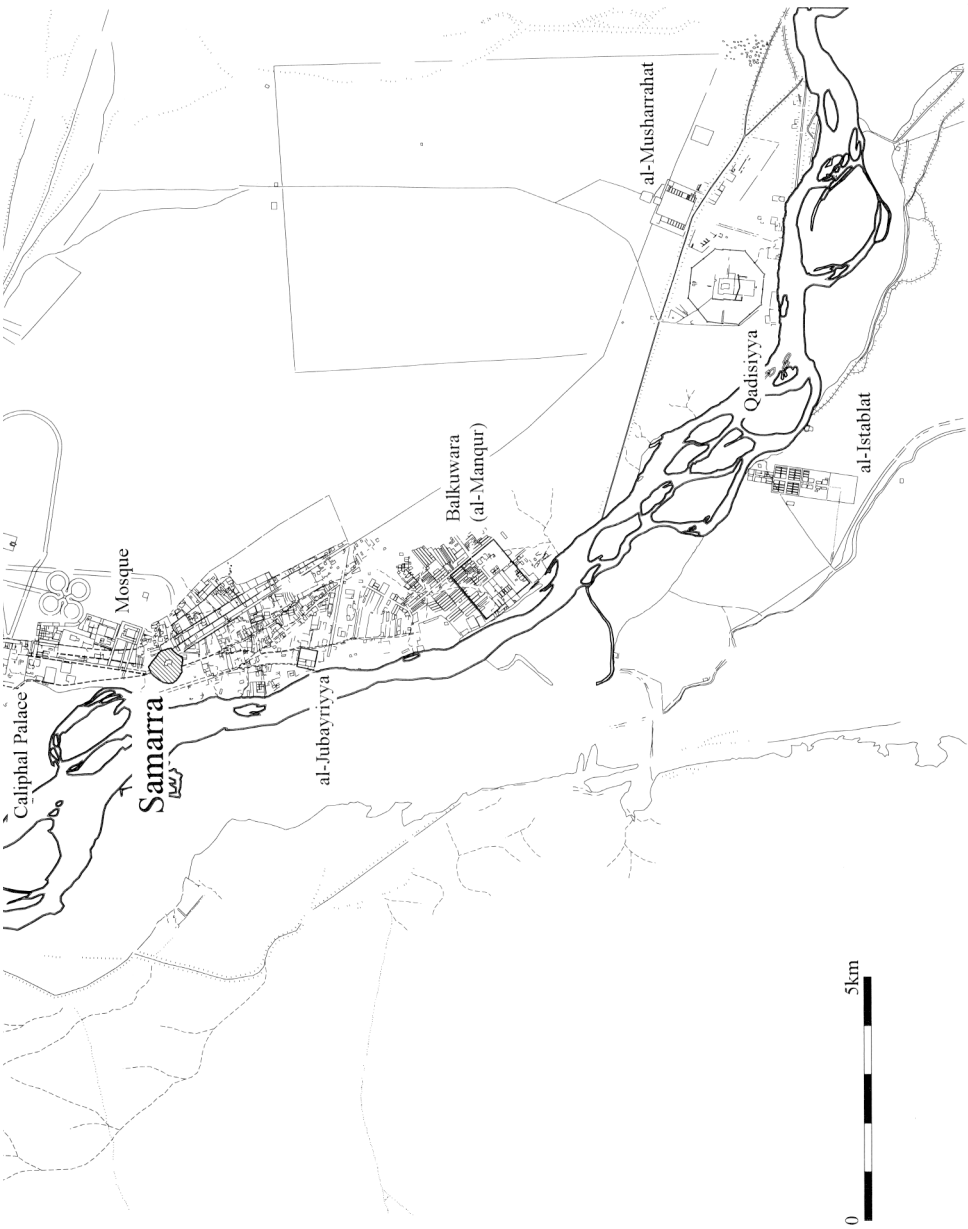
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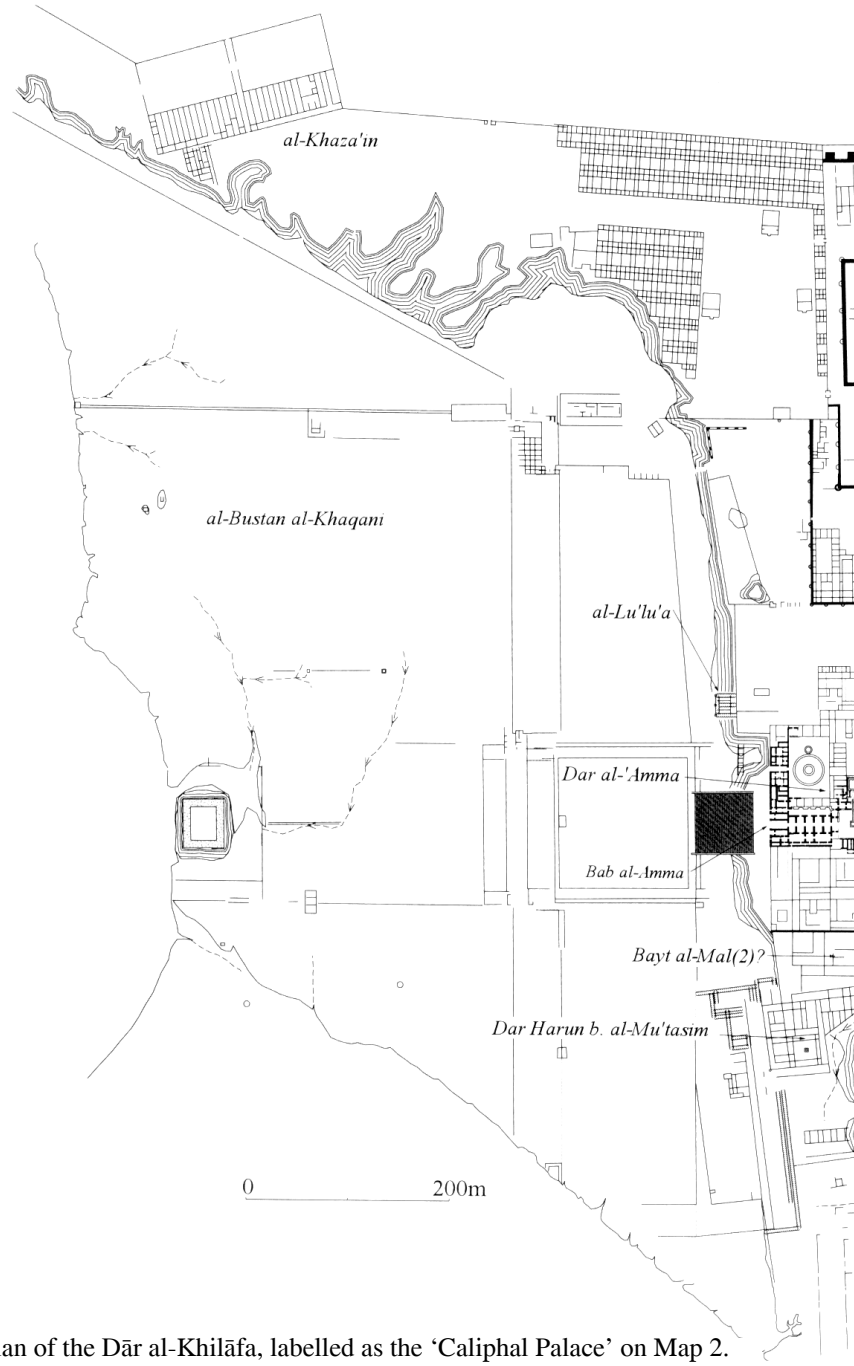
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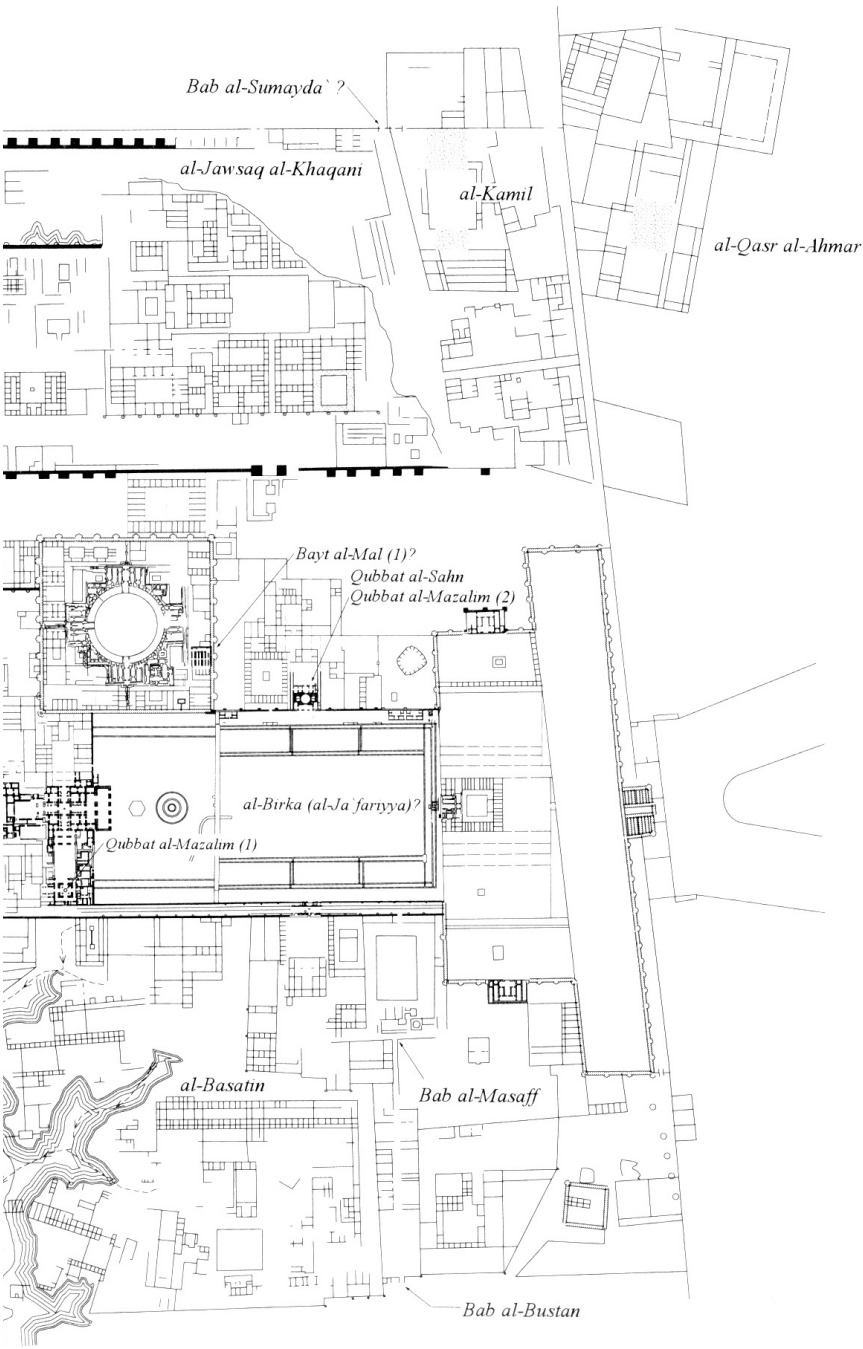
Map 2 Map of Samarra. The Dār al-Khilāfa is labelled ‘Caliphal Palace’; al-ᶜArūs is labelled ‘al-Istablat’.

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Map 3 Plan of the Dār al-Khilāfa, labelled as the 'Caliphal Palace' on Map 2.

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INTRODUCTION

This book is a history of the rituals by which the first Muslim monarchs were formally acknowledged. Like the Christian Roman emperor and the Iranian King of Kings, the caliph of the first Muslim empire was acclaimed by his followers and received oaths of allegiance from them. He appeared before them enthroned in both religious and royal settings, bearing the insignia of his office. That the caliph was a 'monarch', and in some senses a 'king', perhaps does not need to be restated.[1] However, the emphasis in much of Islamic political thought on the notion of 'kingship' (*mulk*) as mere earthly, or temporal power, in contrast to the legitimate authority of the 'caliphate' (*khilāfa*), which is derived from God, can obscure the important continuities between caliphal authority and that of ancient Near Eastern monarchy.[2] Because of this distinction in the Islamic tradition, 'monarchy' is probably a better description of the caliphate than 'kingship'; it encompasses the shared cultural heritage with ancient Near Eastern rulership, while acknowledging the distinctive semantic and conceptual transformations of that heritage that took place in Islam.

The monarchs of Rome, Iran and Islam each represented temporal and sacral authority in an imperial context – they were both 'king' and 'priest' of a pre-eminent, divinely sanctioned world power. In Islam, a division of roles between the caliph and his Muslim subjects eventually led to 'classical' Sunni orthodoxy (that is, the four main schools of medieval Sunni Islam), in which the right to interpret God's law (*sharīᶜa*) came to reside not exclusively in the person of the caliph, but rather in God's community as a whole. However, this does not invalidate the parallel with Rome and Iran, where an unstable division of authority between 'church' and 'state' was also maintained. Furthermore, there is very good evidence that during the first centuries of Islam many held the caliph – as

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the representative of God on earth – to have far greater sacerdotal status and legislative power than later orthodoxies would allow.[3]

Indeed, what distinguishes rightful monarchy from mere secular power is the performance of symbolic acts of communication that establish recognition of the monarch's sacred status as a divinely favoured ruler.[4] 'Ritual' is used throughout this book in this sense of the communicative performance of gestures and other symbolic exchanges.[5] One of the most important of these acts of symbolic communication, indeed, arguably the ritual *sine qua non* of monarchy, is the ceremony of inauguration or accession.[6] This ceremony, which usually entails a sequence of ritual acts, is variously referred to by one element in the sequence – as unction, enthronement, coronation, acclamation or investiture. A form of the same rituals was very often used to establish the succession through the recognition of a 'crown prince', 'co-emperor' or 'heir apparent'. This book seeks to establish what was distinctive about this inaugural ritual in early Islamic monarchy, and how it evolved during the formation, consolidation and decline of the first Muslim empire (between *c*. 630 and *c*. 865 CE).

Iran, Rome and Arabia in Late Antiquity

In the centuries before Islam, the Near East was dominated by the two imperial powers of Iran and Rome. Sasanian Iran (after the Sasanian dynasty that ruled Iran from 224 to 650 CE) was a predominantly inland empire, centred on the Iranian plateau, which stretches between the Zagros mountains in the west and Transoxiana and Afghanistan in the east. However, its agrarian heartlands lay below the plateau to the west, in the fertile lowlands around the Tigris and the Euphrates, as did the administrative capital, at Ctesiphon (near modern Baghdad). To the south, the Persian Gulf connected the empire with Africa and South Asia. In contrast, Rome's geography was maritime; it controlled the Mediterranean coasts of Europe, North Africa and the Near East and the southern coast of the Black Sea. By the mid-to-late sixth century, on the eve of Islam, the territorial centre of gravity of the Roman empire lay in the east – in the Balkans, Asia Minor, Egypt, North Africa and the Levant. Its capital was at 'New Rome', or Constantinople (modern Istanbul), on the Balkan side of the Bosphorus straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.[7]

Conflict between Rome and Iran had fluctuated in the centuries before Islam, but had escalated during the sixth and early seventh centuries. For strategic reasons, this led to Roman and Iranian involvement with the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, who controlled the southern end of their heavily fortified land border, which ran north–south through the 'Fertile Crescent' – the arch of fertile land that linked Roman Oriens (modern Israel, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon) with

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the plains of the Tigris and the Euphrates in Sasanian Iraq. The armies of Rome and Iran could not operate effectively in the deserts to the south of the Fertile Crescent, and so both empires cultivated client allies among the tribes who controlled the steppes leading out of the Arabian Peninsula.[8]

Since the third century CE, the Sasanian kings of Iran had supported the Naṣrid kings, who led the tribal federation of the Banū Lakhm from their capital at al-Ḥīra (on the southern, Arabian, side of the Euphrates).[9] In the later sixth century, Iran had also intervened in the far south of the Arabian Peninsula, installing client rulers over the South Arabian kingdom of Ḥimyar. Many of those on the eastern Arabian littoral also paid homage to Iran, and there is even some evidence that Sasanian representatives may have sought to tax the remote west Arabian settlement of Mecca, where Muḥammad was born. In contrast, Rome had made alliances with a sequence of nomadic tribal federations. In the sixth century the emperor Justinian (r. 527–65) increased Rome's patronage of the Jafnid clan that led the wider tribal grouping of the Banū Ghassān, partly in order to counteract the military effectiveness of Iran's Naṣrid allies at al-Ḥīra. Authority over the tribes of Roman Oriens was delegated to these Jafnid kings. Rome did not intervene directly in South Arabia, but a Christian ally, the king of Aksum, in Ethiopia, was an important influence on both southern and western Arabia.[10]

The prolonged political, economic and cultural influence of Rome and Iran on the periphery of the Arabian Peninsula before Islam would be reason enough to make the history of Roman and Iranian royal accession and succession important to the study of the same aspect of early Islamic society. What makes the political cultures of the two empires doubly significant is that the Muslim empire was formed by the conquest and colonisation of all the Iranian empire and much of the Roman empire; Islamic political culture originated on the remote margins of the Roman and Iranian late antique Near East but developed at its centre.

ROYAL ACCESSION IN IRAN

In Sasanian Iran, the king was a descendant of the gods, blessed and made victorious by them, who protected his subjects from enemies and so was recognised by them as their ruler, the 'King of Kings'.[11] Sasanian claims to divinely ordained kingship were expressed in figural form in the giant rock reliefs that some of the kings had carved in their ancestral territory of Fars, in south-west Iran. In these early Sasanian tableaux, the King of Kings and the senior Zoroastrian deity, Ahura Mazda, face one another, either standing or on horseback. The King of Kings receives the royal diadem from the god, the circular form of which is seen between the two imposing figures, each of whom grasps it with his right hand.[12]

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Agnatic bloodline was also essential to Iranian monarchy. At least by the late sixth century, the Sasanians claimed descent from their ancient Achaemenid forebear, Darius III (r. 336–330 BCE) and, ultimately, from the mythical Kayanid kings of Iran.[13] The importance of the king's more immediate, lineage is evident in the continuous power of the descendants of the first Sasanian king, Ardashir (r. 224–*c*. 240 CE), for almost all the 400 years before Islam ('Sasanian' derives from Ardashir's grandfather, Sasan). However, although heredity was a prerequisite for royal power, it was divine favour, victory and acclamation by the priesthood and nobility, sometimes preceded by prior designation by the former king, that confirmed each Sasanian king's status.

The balance between the importance of these elements at any given accession depended in part upon specific circumstances and, given their symbolic dimension, in part upon the observer's perspective. Two of the fullest sources for Sasanian accession and succession give quite different emphases. The Paikuli inscription (*c*. 293) commemorates the accession of Narseh I (r. 293–302) and records Narseh's victory in a conflict over the succession against his nephew, the 'usurper' Bahrām III.[14] Here, it is divine favour, bloodline, election, acclamation and enthronement that make the Iranian king. According to the inscription, the usurper Bahrām III had been crowned without proper consultation with the Iranian princes and, worse yet, with the help of the Zoroastrian demon Ahriman and other devils. A coalition of Iranian notables, led by Narseh, deposed and defeated the usurper. An assembly then convened in Narseh's presence at Paikuli for the formal recognition of him as the King of Kings. Messages were sent out 'to the *hargbed* (perhaps 'chief tax official'[15]) [and the landholders and the princes and] the grandees and the nobles and the houselords [and the others?]'. Narseh reminded these notables how the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, Ardashir I, had been succeeded by his son, Shapur I (r. *c*. 240–*c*. 272), because, 'in [the royal] family, [no other?] king [was?] greater(?) [and better?], except Ardashir, King of Kings'. Narseh then asked them if they knew of anyone superior to his father, Shapur I, who might now govern the empire. They did not, and so Narseh asked if *anyone* more suitable than he, Narseh, were known to them, and again the '*hargbed* [and the landholders and the princes and the grandees and the nobles and the Persians] and the Parthians' responded that Narseh's lineage, divine favour, fortune, wisdom, courage and victory made him the best candidate; at which point he 'ascended the throne'.[16]

In contrast, the *Letter of Tansar*, which probably reflects late-sixth-century Sasanian ideas,[17] emphasises the importance of the clerical elite in confirming the king's choice of successor and then in acclaiming him and crowning him as such before his precursor's death (perhaps similar to the process by which the unfortunate Bahrām III had come to power):

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> That night [having affirmed the king's choice of heir] they will set the crown and throne in the audience-room and the groups of noblemen will take up their positions in their own places. The *mobad* ('chief priest') with *herbad*s ('religious officials') and nobles, the illustrious and the pillars of the realm, will go to the assembly of the princes; and they will range themselves before them and will say,
>
> 'We have carried our perplexity before God Almighty and He has deigned to show us the right way and to instruct us in what is best.'
>
> The *mobad* will cry aloud, saying,
>
> 'The angels have approved the kingship of such-a-one, son of such-a-one. Acknowledge him also, ye creatures of God and good tidings be yours!'
>
> They will take up that prince and seat him on the throne and place the crown on his head . . .[18]

The emphasis on the special role of the *mobad* and the religious officials may be prescriptive rather than descriptive; how important the priests were in making the king may have been exaggerated by the *Letter*'s clerical author. However, both the acclamation and coronation by the elite parallel the ritual forms described in the Paikuli inscription. Iranian monarchy was a variant of the ancient Eurasian pattern of sacral kingship, in which divine favour, victory, prior designation, heredity and popular acclamation were the foundations of legitimate authority.

Royal accession in Rome

In Rome, the basic elements of royal legitimacy resembled those in Iran, but their relative importance differed. Most notably, the bloodline of the ruling family was given far less emphasis.[19] Without agnatic descent restricting claims to the throne, power was often its own justification; no one dynasty held the emperorship in Constantinople for more than three generations in the fifth and sixth centuries.[20] Recognition through the election and acclamation of the army, senate and people as someone victorious and favoured by God was what made the emperor. The acclamation took place either at the ceremonial parade ground of the Hebdomen, outside the city, or at the chariot arena of the Hippodrome, within it. If the acclamation had taken place at the Hebdomen, it was followed by the emperor's ceremonial entry into the city as a victorious soldier, which ended at the church of Hagia Sophia. If the acclamation had occured at the Hippodrome (as it tended to from the late fifth century), then the emperor simply processed from the palace that adjoined it to Hagia Sophia. During the acclamation ceremonies, the new emperor was crowned with a torque by a 'first commander' (*campiductor*); then the patriarch placed the 'imperial cloak' (*chlamys*) on the emperor's shoulders

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and the diadem or crown on his head. When dynastic succession did take place, a process not unlike the coronation of the nominated successor of the Sasanian king helped to bring it about: a relative was named as co-ruler, crowned by the emperor and then acclaimed by the senate, army and people, to rule alongside the emperor as his junior or his equal. However, the same process could equally be used to designate a non-relative as a successor, and sometimes it was not used at all.[21]

With the Christianisation of the Roman empire during and after the fourth century CE, the emperors claimed to represent God's authority on earth. This idea is expressed in the military oath (*sacramentum*), sworn by recruits into the Roman army:

> They swear by God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and also by His Imperial Majesty which by God's command all men should love and venerate. For faithful loyalty and watchful devotion should be pledged to the emperor who received the name Augustus, as though they were pledged to God in bodily presence. Both civilian and military serve God when they love him who reigns at God's behest.[22]

The theoretical basis of this monotheist dimension of royal authority was Old Testament kingship. Whereas the New Testament presented no clear model for temporal monarchy, the historical books of the Old Testament, suitably 'dejudaised', provided the pattern for divinely sanctioned authority.[23] Furthermore, the tensions in the Bible between the legitimatory principles of divine choice, popular election and hereditary succession paralleled the conflicting principles of succession in the Roman empire.[24] Like Saul, the first king of the Old Testament, the late antique Roman emperor was chosen by God (1 Samuel 9: 16, 10: 24), from Whom all legitimate authority derived; in 574 Justin II told his adoptive son, Tiberius: 'It is not I who gives you the crown, but God by my hand.' [25] However, like Saul, the emperor was also acclaimed by 'the people', and 'made king' by them (1 Samuel 10: 24, 11: 15). On the other hand, God could bless a whole dynasty, as He had blessed the progeny of David (2 Samuel 7: 12–16). Despite this blessing for a family of kings, each new member of the dynasty still needed to be designated as a crown prince or king, like Solomon, and acclaimed as such by God's people, in a renewal of the covenant between God and David (1 Kings 1.43–8; Ps. 132).

When the imperial capital of Constantinople was delivered from a siege in August 626, a contemporary source has it that the city's patriarch gave a speech invoking Old Testament kingship, through the words of the prophet Isaiah:

> 'Thus speaks the Lord our God: I will defend this city to save it for me and for my servant David' (Isaiah 37: 35). For our emperor is a new David in his piety to God and his clemency to his subjects. And the Lord will crown him with victories

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> like David, and his son who reigns with him, making him wise and peaceable like Solomon, and bestowing on him and his father, piety and orthodoxy. Ask this, prophet, from the God of Solomon who knows no jealousy, and beseech the Virgin, whom you foresaw with the eyes of the mind to be truly the Mother of God, and proclaimed in words of prophecy (cf. Isaiah 7: 14, 40: 9), to save the city forever and its people . . .[26]

The emperor Heraclius' son, to whom the speech refers, is 'Heraclius the new Constantine', who had been crowned as *basileus* (here, 'co-emperor') by his father in 613, at the unprecedentedly young age of 8 months. Two more sons were eventually crowned as co-emperors: Heraclonas and David, who had been born in 630, the year of Heraclius' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the city of the biblical David.[27] Nine silver plates portraying the events from the biblical account of David's life, most likely manufactured under Heraclian patronage, are further evidence of the importance of the archetypal divinely elected dynasty.[28] Heraclius' descendants retained control of the empire for seventy years after his death, and were the first in a series of dynasties that ruled the Byzantine empire after the seventh century.

THE ORIGINS OF THE MUSLIM EMPIRE

In 622 (year 1 of the Islamic lunar calendar) Muḥammad became the leader of a group of monotheist believers at the oasis of Yathrib (later Medina). The oasis was located in the Ḥijāz, in central West Arabia, on the remote fringes of the imperial world to the north. By *c*. 630 Muḥammad's community dominated the Ḥijāz and also exerted influence over much of the rest of the Arabian Peninsula, including the nomadic tribes of its interior – not least by virtue of having gained control of an important shrine at Mecca. Muḥammad died in 632, after some tentative raids to the north. His successors continued to direct the Arabian tribes outwards, against the empires of Rome and Iran. In a series of spectacular military victories, Roman Egypt (Ar. *Miṣr*) and Oriens (that is, the Levant and Syria, Ar. *Bilād al-Shām*) and most of the Iranian empire fell to Muslim control by *c*. 650.[29] These territories were to form the core of the Muslim empire, which was ruled by the Umayyad dynasty from Syria for most of the period *c*. 660–750 and from Iraq by the Abbasid dynasty after 750; both dynasties were descendants of the tribal grouping to which Muḥammad had belonged, the Quraysh.

It is not surprising that, although Islam began in Arabia, the Muslim empire came to be centred outside it, in the 'Fertile Crescent' of post-Roman Syria and post-Sasanian Iraq. This region provided the material and cultural resources to sustain an imperial state, which were not available in Arabia itself. However,

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despite the influence of the heritage of the defeated empires, Muslim accession rituals remained distinct from their Roman and Iranian precursors in some important respects. The differences were in large part a function of the unique circumstances of the first formative years of the Muslim empire in the Arabian Peninsula, which lay outside the direct influence of the great powers to the north and had its own distinctive variants on the cultural patterns of the Near East. This Arabian heritage exerted a determinative influence on the way that the political cultures of the conquered empires were reshaped after the conquests.

The main political institution in pre-Islamic Arabia was the pledged covenant under oath. This is an ubiquitous cultural form, but it had a particular importance in pre-Islamic Arabia, where, in the absence of a powerful state, kinship and pledged agreements were the only basis for security. Most of the Peninsula could be inhabited only by nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists, who tended to resist domination or exploitation by settled powers. Settled communities existed at oases, on the coasts and in the highlands, but these polities also tended to have a tribal political structure, based upon kin and covenant. The main exception was South Arabia, where agriculture and trade did support the institutions of state power. In central Arabia, however, the pledged word was almost the only expression of political obligation.

As in other ancient and late antique Eurasian polities, sanctions were imposed on those who broke the pledge: a patron deity (or deities) was named as a guarantor for the covenant, and their anger would bring disaster upon a perjurer. Where an agreement was made between two equals (as was often the case in Arabia), divine displeasure was often the only viable sanction that could be brought to bear on a treaty-breaker. In unequal agreements, one party might claim to be representative of a god or gods; even then, however, there was a mutuality to the agreement, in that those who pledged their allegiance to the deity's earthly representative expected protection and rewards in return.[30] Such pledged agreements became the means of agreeing upon religio-political leadership in early Islam.

The argument of the first part of this book is that the precise form of the early Islamic oath of allegiance reflects the fusion of late antique African and Near Eastern Judaeo-Christian monotheism with much older Arabian religious and political customs. After the adoption of Christianity by the Roman empire in the fourth century CE, Arabia witnessed a number of syntheses of existing Arabian religio-political traditions with late antique monotheism. Because Judaeo-Christian monotheism preserved a version of ancient Near Eastern ideas about political contract in its representation of God's relations with Humanity as a king's covenant with his people, it was inherently compatible with existing Arabian traditions concerning the foundation of political communities under the patronage of a deity, or deities. The most successful of these syntheses was

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that set out in the Qurʾān in the seventh century, and, as a result, we know most about it, but it was not the first. On both the northern fringes of Arabia and in the southern highlands, earlier Judaeo-Christian variants of Arabian kingship had developed. All of them were overtaken by the great success of the early seventh-century West Arabians.

In early Islam, as in late antiquity in general, military power was explicitly understood to have a sacral dimension. The charismatic authority of the Prophet Muḥammad and of his immediate successors as representatives of God was legitimated by the continued military success of the Muslims. As a consequence, the Muslims' particular monotheist variant on the ancient cultural form of the pledge or oath became so thoroughly imbued with sacred significance that, like many other aspects of Islamic religious practice, it could easily be reinvented or transformed only in ways that invoked monotheism in general, and the memory of the practice of the first Muslim community in particular. It is ultimately for this reason that the accession ceremony of the monarch of the Muslim empire is almost always referred to in the extant sources, not as a 'coronation' or 'investiture', or by some other term, but as a 'pledge of allegiance' (Ar. *bayᶜa*).[31]

Nonetheless, the ritual of the *bayᶜa* was reinvented and transformed. The continued importance of military power in what was, in *c*. 700, still an empire of armed tribesmen organised for continual conquest meant that the pledge of allegiance continued to have a practical importance – the allegiance of the tribal armies was affirmed through oaths of loyalty. However, already by 700 the empire stretched from Carthage in North Africa to Balkh in Afghanistan. Whereas, in the first years of rapid conquest, the rewards of victory and colonisation in the name of God had been sufficient to unite the polity, mechanisms for confirming political authority in each generation that might have worked in relatively small Arabian polities could not continue to function on an imperial scale. Some form of hereditary monarchy, acceptable to the military elites and sanctioned in religious terms, was perhaps inevitable if the political unity of the Muslims (an ideological imperative in the new religious dispensation) was to be retained. The complex interactions between Arabian–Islamic culture and the indigenous cultures of the Fertile Crescent and Iran out of which 'classical' Islam began to emerge in the eighth and ninth centuries are far from fully understood, but some of the consequences of these interactions are evident in the evolution of the rituals of caliphal succession and accession.

Rituals of Islamic monarchy: the Umayyads and Abbasids

The consolidation of the Muslim empire took place under two dynasties of caliphs: the Umayyads (*c*. 660–750), who ruled from the former Roman diocese

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of Oriens ('Syria'), and the Abbasids (after 750), who ruled from the former Sasanian capital province of Asōrestān (Iraq). Because the Umayyads ruled from post-Roman Syria, with armies predominantly recruited from the nomad population of that region, they drew heavily upon the symbolism of Roman royal authority and on the customs of nomadic Syria. They combined an Arabian emphasis on agnatic kinship – the 'tribe' – with notions of divinely ordained monarchy rooted in the Old Testament, the Qurʾān and Arabian tradition. However, the Umayyads failed to capture the Roman capital of Constantinople. (The last siege was in 717.) This meant that Roman imperial symbolism was never entirely the Umayyads' own, whereas all the cultural resources of the heartlands of Sasanian Iran were available to them. There is good evidence for the growing influence of Iranian political culture at the later Umayyad caliphal court, as the caliphs sought stronger institutions for imperial government.

Civil war within the Umayyad dynasty and its armies brought about conditions in which rival claims to power could thrive. The 'Abbasid Revolution' of 747–50 installed a new dynasty of caliphs, who ruled from post-Sasanian Iraq, not post-Roman Syria, and whose military support depended at first upon armies drawn from the mixed Arab and Iranian population of Khurasan (modern north-east Iran/north-west Afghanistan), whom they garrisoned in Iraq. In the Abbasid empire, acclamation by these armies was enormously important to gaining and retaining the caliphate (just as the Syrian army had been crucial to the succession in Umayyad times). However, the Abbasid rulers also established much more effective instruments of state power. Under the Abbasids, even more than under the Umayyads, the process of acclamation took place not just through oaths and pledges of allegiance (with both 'Arabic–Islamic' and 'Iranian' precedents), but also through the full panoply of royal ritual and ceremonial. The leadership of war and religious rites, rituals of procession, reception and audience in the cities and aulic and sacerdotal rituals in palaces and mosques were all occasions for the communication of status, loyalty and authority.

The political culture of post-Sasanian Iran exerted a very great influence on the Abbasids, not least through the large numbers of non-Arabians who were drawn into the service of the dynasty at the caliphal court in Iraq. At the same time, the legitimatory paradigm of a (still highly contested) Arabic–Islamic religious tradition remained hegemonic; the Abbasid Revolution had been an Islamic revolution, which explicitly sought to bring in a millenarian golden age of rule by 'the family of the Prophet Muḥammad', and this continued to be the basis of early Abbasid claims to world rule. (In the east, local secession from Abbasid rule was, it is true, sometimes initially expressed as pre-Islamic Iranian revivalism, but even this was almost completely replaced by Islamic rebellion by the mid-ninth century.) Within this Islamic paradigm, the historical memory of the conduct of

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the Prophet and the earliest Muslims became increasingly normative, especially as it was remembered in the garrrison cities of Basra and Kufa, in the Abbasid heartlands of Iraq, and in the 'Prophet's City' of Yathrib (Madīnat al-Nabī, or Medina), in what was now the holy land of the Ḥijāz.

The elaboration of ideas of covenant and allegiance within an increasingly normative Islamic discourse, in which the status of the Prophet Muḥammad as the unique model for proper Islamic practice was widely accepted, came to be reflected in the invocation of his example in Abbasid caliphal ceremonial. This marks a shift from Umayyad accession rituals, in which general articulations of Arabian monotheism were more prominent than explicit invocations of the model of the Prophet.

Two further consequences of the evolution of Arabic–Islamic political culture at the Umayyad and Abbasid courts in the eighth and ninth centuries are particularly evident in the sources. First, inheritance and bloodline, which were important in Near Eastern culture in general and in Arabian tribal culture in particular, retained great importance in the evolving Islamic tradition. Eventually, the idea of the kin-group of the Prophet having a unique claim to the leadership of the Muslims became very widespread. (However, as in Rome and Iran, heredity was necessary but not sufficient, and acclamation and even election by the 'people', through the oath of allegiance, were also required.) Finally, the importance of literacy in the articulation of caliphal power grew rapidly from late Umayyad times (730s and after). This was an aspect of the establishment of an effective apparatus of empire, which saw Arabian tribal custom become a fully imperial ceremonial, managed and interpreted by a bureaucracy of ideologues and jurists.

THE SOURCES AND THEIR ANALYSIS

The trajectory of the history of the first Muslim empire has shaped the available evidence for the political rituals of the rulers of that empire.[32] Early Islamic culture inherited the predominantly oral culture of pre-Islamic central and West Arabia, and so the emergence of written Arabic sources for Islam, in the eighth and ninth centuries, is itself evidence of the transformation of Arabic–Islamic society after the conquest of the Near East.[33] The beginning of the written Arabic–Islamic tradition occurred in the early-to-mid-eighth century, approximately halfway through the period examined in this book. Parts I and II are concerned with pre-Islamic Arabia and early Islam (*c*. 550–*c*. 660) and the Umayyad caliphate (*c*. 660–750), respectively, when Arabic historical writing had scarcely begun (and from when it is certainly not extant in an unmediated form). Parts III and IV cover the early Abbasid period (750–809) and middle Abbasid period (809–865), during which time the earliest extant Arabic sources were composed. The very

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different source material for the four periods has determined the approach taken to the history of ritual in each section.

Because of the absence of early sources, there will always be many historical questions about the origins and early development of the earliest Muslim polity, that will remain unanswered (Part I, *c*. 550–*c*. 660). However, there is good corroborative evidence for the barest outlines of the much later Islamic account of events in contemporaneaous accounts in Syriac and Armenian from outside the Arabian Peninsula. That is, we can be certain that the Arabian conquests of the Near East, which took place in the 630s, 640s and 650s, were closely connected to a West Arabian monotheist religious movement, in which the figure of the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 632) was very important.[34] Chapter 1 seeks to situate the formation of this earliest Muslim polity in the context of what is known of pre-Islamic Arabian political culture in archaeology, inscriptions and the later Arabic tradition. Chapter 2 addresses the beliefs of Muḥammad and his community through the evidence of the Qurʾān. Chapter 3 presents what evidence there is for rituals of loyalty and leadership in the 'conquest society' of the early-to-mid-seventh century.

With the consolidation of the structures of Muslim empire under the Umayyad dynasty of monarchs (Part II, *c*. 660–750), the evidential situation improves. There are, however, almost no detailed descriptions of Umayyad accession rituals in the Arabic–Islamic tradition. This is only partially a function of the Umayyads having been overthrown by the Abbasids in 750. The tribal basis of Umayyad power, in which consultation among the ruling tribe decided the succession, did not demand much written communication, and this predominantly oral court culture does not seem to have generated royal annals. For this reason, it is rarely possible to discuss specific accession rituals in detail. The only exception for the early Umayyad period is due to the chance survival of a description of an accession outside the Arabic historical tradition, in a contemporaneous Syriac source that describes the accession of Muʿāwiya (r. *c*. 660–80). This, and the succession to Muʿāwiya, is the subject of Chapter 4.

However, because the Umayyads remained heavily reliant on nomad armies for their power, they did patronise the media of royal interaction with the nomads. In literary terms, this meant panegyric court poetry. Verse had been enormously important in pre-Islamic Arabian culture, and it retained its status in public discourse about legitimacy and authority under Islam. A well-established oral tradition also meant that poetry could be remembered and transmitted to later generations. Because of this cultural status, and because poetry's rhyme and metre make it relatively difficult for a later transmitter to invent or modify, it is potentially contemporaneous evidence for the Umayyad court, albeit preserved only in much later collections. Umayyad poetry is used in Chapter 5 to

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reconstruct aspects of ideas about the pledge of allegiance in the early Umayyad period (*c*. 680–*c*. 710).

'Non-caliphal' perspectives can be derived from the poetry of the Umayyads' rivals, and from the later Islamic legal tradition. The earliest extant collections of legal texts were made in the late eighth century and most were composed in the ninth and tenth centuries. The traditions they preserve are thus not secure evidence for the context to which they are attributed (in most cases, the time of the Prophet Muḥammad), but the later context in which they *did* originate can sometimes be identified quite precisely and is itself sometimes quite early. In the case of the oath of allegiance, some material almost certainly originates in the context of the second civil war (683–92) and its aftermath, which saw the Marwanid branch of the Umayyad dynasty take power. This legal material can be juxtaposed with early poetry to give a fuller picture of late-seventh and early eighth-century ideas.

Alongside poetry, the Umayyads also used the economic and cultural resources of the empire to articulate their claims to authority through the media of precious metal coins, inscriptions and monumental architecture. Thus, it is from this period that one can properly speak of 'Islamic monarchy', in the sense of a dynastic autocracy, sacralised through ritual in state-sponsored palaces and mosques.[35] Chapter 6 assembles the evidence for the establishment of dynastic succession under the Marwanid branch of the Umayyads and its relationship to the tribal structures of political power in the Marwanid state. Chapter 7 uses the same evidential corpus to assemble the evidence for Marwanid ritual and ceremonial – location, participation and material culture.

The later Marwanid period saw the growing use of literacy in the articulation of royal power and authority. Writing had become increasingly important in Islamic society as a whole, and, from *c*. 730, the caliphs sponsored prose as an important medium for the articulation of their legitimacy. The ninth- and tenth-century sources preserve versions of 'state letters' produced by the secretaries of the caliph Hishām (r. 724–43) and his successors.[36] These state letters include communications sent between the caliph and his provincial governors concerning rituals of accession and succession, as well as what are essentially scripts for public performance in the congregational mosques. This important break in the evidence for the promulgation of caliphal authority is the subject of Chapters 8 and 9.

The character of the historical traditions about the period after the Abbasid Revolution is quite different from those for earlier periods. Evidence for the early Abbasid period (Part III, 750–809) is still secondary, in that it is extant only in the same ninth- and tenth-century compilations of earlier material. Important sources include al-Balādhurī's (d. 892) *Ansāb al-ashrāf* ('Genealogies of the Nobles')

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and al-Ṭabarī's (d. 923) *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk* ('History of the Prophets and Kings'). However, the early Abbasid period falls within the lifetime of the first major compilers of written Arabic history, upon whom these later authors relied, such as al-Wāqidī (d. 823), al-Haytham b. ʿAdī (d. 821–4) and al-Madāʾinī (d. *c*. 830–50). Many of these writers were close to the Abbasid court, and record acounts from other, earlier courtiers. Whereas the historian of Umayyad accession ritual has to work in quite general terms, looking for patterns and themes in fragmentary evidence, accounts of particular Abbasid rituals of accession and succession survive (albeit, usually from a metropolitan, court perspective; the provinces and the army are not well represented in the sources). This permits the study of specific rituals of accession and succession in their historical context, and, for this reason, most of Parts III and IV is structured reign by reign, in order to highlight the distinctive features of each ritual and how the historical record of that ritual was shaped by the agendas of those who remembered it.

Indeed, the survival of detailed accounts of Abbasid accession and succession by members of the imperial elite in itself reflects the importance of ritual in Abbasid court culture in general and in the legitimation of the caliph in particular. Both the frequent survival of more than one version of events, and the general tendency to make even polemical accounts of accessions seem realistic,[37] mean that we can be fairly certain of the basic symbolic elements of Abbasid ritual in Iraq and can often reconstruct particular rituals in some detail. Chapters 10 and 11 address the reigns of al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī (754–75 and 775–85) and al-Hādī and al-Rashīd (785–6 and 786–809).

The later tradition preserves many copies of documents from the early Abbasid period. Attempts to negotiate about the succession generated a series of contractual documents, examples of which are extant from 776, 802 and 805. These 'dispositive documents' share features with Islamic contract law as it was evolving in the cities of Abbasid Iraq and so cast light on the early Abbasid understanding of the contractual dimension of the succession and on the growing importance of the written text in caliphal ceremonial. The evidence of these texts is presented at the end of Part III, in Chapter 12.

The middle Abbasid period (Part IV, 809–65) is the first period of Islamic history for which there is a substantial corpus of extant near-contemporaneous evidence for events at the caliphal court: most of the major sources for the history of the caliphate (such as those named above) were composed during or soon after this period. These often include 'official' material from what appear to be royal annals; we first hear of an 'office of historical records' (*dīwān al-sīra*) at the beginning of the ninth century.[38] This fuller evidence still presents significant problems of interpretation,[39] but the greater detail of the accounts permits a more detailed understanding of the metropolitan rituals of this period, especially after

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the move to the new Iraqi capital of Samarra (836–92), which is archaeologically extant. Chapters 13, 14 and 15 cover the periods 809–47, 847–61 and 861–5.

Among the copies of documents from the middle Abbasid period, two near-identical texts, recorded by al-Ṭabarī, stand out as particularly important. These are the two oaths of allegiance said to have been composed for the accessions of al-Muntaṣir (r. 861–2) and al-Muʿtazz (r. 865–9), respectively. They are the first extant documents composed for the pledge of allegiance to a caliph on his accession and are translated and analysed in Chapter 16. As he does in earlier periods of caliphal history, al-Ṭabarī uses these records of formal covenants before God to highlight the disastrous consequences of failure to fulfil them; there is an irony to his presentation of the solemn covenant texts for succession and accession and a polemical value to his focus on the basis of the authority of the caliphate in Islamic law.[40] However, selection and juxtaposition are quite different from emendation and invention, and there is good evidence that al-Ṭabarī was quite a scrupulous compiler.

Al-Ṭabarī is quite typical of the authors of the extant evidence for the first Muslim empire. Like him, most of the compilers of our sources lived in Iraq in the ninth or tenth century, and many were also religious and legal scholars. These sources not only 'look back' to the seventh and eighth centuries from a ninth- or tenth-century vantage point, but also do so from what is often a 'pious' or 'scholarly' perspective. Hence, their emphasis on the pledge of allegiance (*bayʿa*), modelled on the practice of the Prophet and the first caliphs, as being legally constitutive of the caliphate may in part be a back projection of later, 'scholarly' ideas into earlier periods – later ideas that sometimes seek to extract tidy legal theories from messy past *Realpolitik*.[41] In contrast, the historical–anthropological approach taken in this book does not assume that an internally consistent theory of the caliphate ought to be uncovered through an examination of the history of inaugural ritual during the first 230 or so years of the Muslim empire but, rather, that power and authority were continually contested through the media of competing, evolving and often contradictory symbolic systems, out of which normative 'orthodoxies' eventually emerged.

However, to identify contention, reinvention and transformation is not to suggest that the early history of Islamic political culture was entirely discontinuous. On the contrary, there tends to be a profound conservatism in the forms of political institutions over the *très longue durée*.[42] Although the significance and purpose of the pledge of allegiance changed with the historical context, the prominence of such pledges in the extant accounts for rituals of accession and succession is not simply a trick of their perspective, but also a function of the pledges' genuine importance; Arabian cultural heritage in general, and the legacy of West Arabian monotheism in particular, exerted a determinative influence over

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the development of Islamic political culture in the first Muslim empire. For this reason, Part I situates the formation of the first Muslim polity in the context of pre-Islamic Arabian religio-political culture.

NOTES

1. See, e.g., Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*.
2. Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 163ff.; Crone, *Political Thought*, 6ff.
3. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*; Dagron, *Emperor*.
4. Benveniste, *Indo-European Language*, 307–33. For recent work on the anthropology of kingship, see Quigley, *Kingship*.
5. Bell, *Ritual*, 61ff. A still thought-provoking discussion of the persuasive purpose of political ritual is Cannadine, 'Introduction'. For a survey of ritual and ceremonial in a western medieval empire, see Leyser, 'Ritual'. On the anthropology of ritual and early medieval western sources, see Koziol, 'Dangers of polemic'.
6. Bak, *Coronations*; Steinecke and Weinfurter, *Königsrituale*.
7. Howard-Johnston, 'Two great powers'.
8. Conrad, 'The Arabs'.
9. 'Arabians' (as opposed to 'Arabs') is used throughout to denote the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula before Islam and in the seventh and eighth centuries CE. 'Arab' tends to be reserved for nomadic peoples of the central Arabian interior in this period; from the mid-to-late eighth century, 'Arab' became a more inclusive label for those who traced their heritage back to the Arabian Peninsula or its northern steppes, but could still denote nomads in certain contexts. See, now, Retsö, *Arabs*.
10. Munro-Hay, *Aksum*.
11. On political theory and ritual in Sasanian Iran, see the relevant sections of Christensen, *L'Iran*; *CHI*, iii, pts 1 and 2; Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*. See also *E.Ir.*, s.v. 'Coronation', 'Crown Prince' (A. Shapur Shahbazi).
12. Herrmann, *Iranian Revival*; Trümpelmann, *Iranische Denkmäler*.
13. Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, 167–8; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, 385–6.
14. Humbach and Skjærvø, *Sassanian Inscription*.
15. Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, 183–6; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, 61, 501.
16. Humbach and Skjærvø, *Sassanian Inscription*, iii.1, §3–§72.
17. Boyce, *Letter of Tansar*, 1ff.
18. Boyce, *Letter of Tansar*, 62.
19. On political theory in the Christian Roman empire, see Dvornik, *Political Philosophy*; Dagron, *Emperor*.
20. Whitby, 'Successors', 86; Dagron, *Emperor*, 14.
21. Dagron, *Emperor*, 59–69.
22. Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, 2.5; tr. Dvornik, *Political Philosophy*, ii, 630.
23. Dagron, 'Judaïser'; Dagron, *Emperor*, 4–5, 48–50, *et passim*.
24. Dagron, *Emperor*, 14, 48–50.
25. Dagron, *Emperor*, 14, n. 4.
26. Cameron, 'Images of authority', 21.
27. Alexander, 'Heraclius', 233–4.
28. Alexander, 'Heraclius'.

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29. This, at least, is the conventional chronology; see below, pp. 21–2, 61.
30. On pledges and covenants in pre-Islamic Arabia, see further below, Ch. 1. On covenant in the ancient Near East, see *ABD*, s.v. 'Covenant' (G. E. Mendenhall, Gary A. Herion); Weeks, *Admonition and Curse*. On oaths of allegiance in Sasanian Iran, see Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, 342–3, 366–8, 380–4, 400, 407. For oaths of allegiance to Roman emperors, see Herrmann, *Der romische Kaisereid*; Svoronos, 'Le Serment'; Campbell, *Emperor*, 19ff.; Lee, *War*, 51–7, 176–93. On the great longevity of such cultural forms, see Wansbrough, *Lingua Franca*.
31. The only substantial history of the *bayᶜa* in the first centuries of Islam is Tyan, *Institutions*, i, 315–54. Other discussions include Pedersen, *Eid*, 52–63; Stern, 'Muḥammad's bond'; Bravmann, '*Bayᶜa* "homage"'; Nazeer Ka Ka Khel, 'The *bayᶜa* and its political role'; Khoury, 'Calife ou roi'; Willis, 'The *bayᶜa* in Islam'; Landau-Tasseron, 'Tribal society', 182–91, 203–9. On the *bayᶜa* in the Buyid period (tenth and eleventh centuries), see Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, esp. 40ff.
32. On Islamic historiography, see Duri, *Historical Writing*; Robinson, *Historiography*.
33. On orality and writing, see Schoeler, *Oral and the Written*. South Arabia is the exception, with royal inscriptions and documents on wood; see *CIH*; Stein, 'Ancient South Arabian minuscule inscriptions'.
34. Scholars are more or less pessimistic about the limits of the evidence; see, e.g., Crone, *Slaves*, 3ff., Donner, *Narratives*. For the non-Muslim evidence, see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam.* For a recent proposal substantially to amend the chronology of the conquest of Iraq, see Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, 161ff., 281–5.
35. Johns, 'Archaeology'; cf. Hoyland, 'New documentary texts'.
36. al-Qāḍī, 'Islamic state letters'.
37. Cf. Buc, 'Text and ritual', 138.
38. Madelung, 'New documents', 337.
39. See Kennedy, 'Caliphs and their chroniclers'.
40. Cf. El-Hibri, *Islamic Historiography* – but his scepticism about the documents themselves is excessive.
41. As in works by al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) and al-Māwardī (d. 1058); see below, pp. 309–11.
42. Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, xii.

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PART I

. . .

LATE ANTIQUE ARABIA AND EARLY ISLAM (*c.* 550–*c.* 660)

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INTRODUCTION

The great political achievement of Muḥammad and his seventh-century successors was the creation of a sustainable political unity that brought together the settled population of the Arabian Peninsula and the tribes of pastoral nomads that dominated the steppes of Syria and Iraq. It was a feat that was unprecedented and unrepeated in Arabia in both scale and consequence: never before had the whole Peninsula come under the political domination of one power, nor had an Arabian federation ever founded such a vast and long-lasting empire.

According to the extant, ninth- and tenth-century sources, loyalty and allegiance within the Muslim polity were publicly communicated in a ritual usually described as the *bayᶜa*, or 'pledge of loyalty'. The expression of allegiance through such oaths is one of the great long-term cultural continuities of the pre-modern Near East (and arguably of Eurasian civilisation as a whole). Covenants for alliance and allegiance were the basis upon which pre-modern empires were built, and the same basic concepts informed the Islamic 'oath of allegiance' as most other oaths of allegiance in the pre-modern world: the weaker party swore to obey the stronger under the sanction of divine punishment for disloyalty and the promise of reward for fulfilment of the oath. In the Muslim polity the pledge was guaranteed by Allāh, the monotheist deity whom the Muslims' leaders represented.

The most significant obstacle to recovering the history of such oaths among the earliest Muslims is the nature of the available evidence. As we have seen, the vast bulk of the evidence for Islam in the early seventh century is found in the Arabic historical tradition. The oral history of the formative decades of Islam began to be written down in the early-to-mid eighth century and is largely extant only in ninth- and tenth-century compilations. There is no doubt that these

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sources do preserve much evidence about the first decades of Islam, but it is also clear that the material has been repeatedly reshaped, edited and embellished during the 150 or so years that separate the extant traditions from the events that they purport to describe;[1] as with all secondary historical sources, we very often find that the Islamic traditions about early Islam in fact tell us more about the later period of their transmission and compilation.

The problem is made more acute because traditions about the earliest Muslim community gained an increasingly kerygmatic status for eighth- and ninth-century Muslims. Alongside the scripture of the Qurʾān, the 'Sunna' – the words and deeds of Muḥammad and his Companions – eventually became the source of all law (in the sense of ritual and social orthopraxis); the early Islamic past came to be remembered as a moment of Prophetic revelation and an ideal model for all Muslims, not in order to explain historical processes in material or cultural terms. This lends much of the Arabic–Islamic tradition a soteriological perspective, in which the Prophet's conduct (and that of his immediate successors) becomes the paradigm through which all political institutions are understood; their pre-Islamic 'pre-history' was largely forgotten or overlooked.

In Chapter 1 an attempt is made to recover the pre-Islamic history of alliance and allegiance in the Arabian Peninsula, in order to understand more fully why the 'pledge of allegiance' assumed the precise form and importance that it did in Islam. The evidence of the Arabic–Islamic tradition – not least pre-Islamic poetry, which retained a cultural status in Islam and thus was at least partially remembered – is combined with that of archaeologically extant inscriptions and other, non-Arabian literary evidence for pre-Islamic Arabia. This long, pre-Islamic perspective is crucial to understanding the origins and early development of Islam within the context of established Arabian monotheist political and communal traditions.

Chapter 2 seeks to recover aspects of ideas about allegiance in the first Muslim community at Medina. This period, before the great conquests beyond the Peninsula, is historically very obscure, both because of the absence of corroborative, contemporaneous, non-Arabian evidence (which begins with the conquests) but also because of the great importance of the Prophet Muḥammad's life and conduct in the much later period when our sources were composed. Much of the extant Prophetic biography is a product of later attempts to explain the Qurʾān or to understand problems of law or ritual. No effective method of identifying early material among the numerous contradictory traditions has yet been found. These severe evidential difficulties are bypassed by taking the Qurʾān itself as the source for Muḥammad's life and times. Among recent assessments of the Qurʾān's provenance, even the more sceptical have suggested that it was already close to being a fixed text by *c.* 700,[2] and many scholars would argue that it has

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been substantially unaltered since *c*. 650.[3] As has often been noted, the Qurʾān has limited evidential value for reconstructing narrative history, but – if an early seventh-century date is accepted – then it is invaluable for the history of ideas, since it is evidence for the ideas of Muḥammad's monotheist community in the Ḥijāz.

Chapter 3 surveys the conquest period of *c*. 628–*c*. 660. This was the era in which the Muslim community encountered the literate cultures beyond the Peninsula, and, as a consquence, we have 'external' corroboration for some of the events described in the later tradition (as well as evidence of the extent of the elaboration and alteration that have taken place).[4] However, the non-Arabian sources say little about institutions of accession and succession, for which the Arabic–Islamic tradition remains the only source. Although much of the detail of the accounts is highly tendentious – elaborated to defend later sectarian positions, to define later legal concepts of institutions or to refine the Prophetic image of Muḥammad or the sacred status of his successors – where it is not contradictory, and where continuities with the pre-Islamic past can be discerned, we can be reasonably confident that it preserves aspects of the nature and function of pledged covenants in the era of the great military and diplomatic success of Arabian monotheism.

NOTES

1. On the *possibility* that the tradition preserves early material, see Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic Historical Tradition*; Donner, *Narratives*, esp. 203ff.
2. Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, 100ff.; Abrache, 'Bible', 46.
3. Donner, *Narratives*, 35–63; Hoyland, 'New documentary texts', 406–9. Cf. al-Aʿẓamī, *Qurʾānic Text*.
4. Conrad, 'Conquest'; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*; Robinson, 'Conquest'.

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CHAPTER

1

ALLIANCE AND ALLEGIANCE IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

ALLIANCE AND ALLEGIANCE IN ANCIENT ARABIA

The Greek geographer and historian Herodotus (d. *c.* 425 BCE) wrote the first ethnographic account of oath-taking for alliance among Arabians:

> No nation regards the sanctity of a pledge (*pistis*) more seriously than the Arabs (*arabioi*). When two men wish to make a solemn compact, they get the service of a third, who stands betweeen them and with a sharp stone cuts the palms of their hands near the base of the thumb; then he takes a little tuft of wool from their clothes, dips it in their blood and smears the blood on seven stones which lie between them, invoking as he does so, the names of Dionysius and Urania; then the person who is giving the pledge, commends the stranger (*xeinos*) – or fellow citizen (*astos*) as the case may be – to his friends (*philoi*), who in their turn consider themselves equally bound to honour it. The only gods the Arabs recognise are Dionysius and Urania; the way they cut their hair – all round in a circle, with the temples shaved – is, they say, in imitation of Dionysius. Dionysius in their language is *Orotalt*, and Urania, *Alilat*.[1]

The *arabioi* that Herodotus describes were probably pastoral nomads in the Sinai or the Negev in *c.* 440 BCE.[2] These northern marches, like most of the Arabian Peninsula to the south, had an ecology that could be exploited only by nomadic pastoralists. The nomads' adaptation to the harsh environment placed them outside the control of settled states, whose armies were unable to establish direct control over the desert. The pact described by Herodotus resembles much later agreements between Arabian tribal groups, which were the basis of security in the absence of state power.[3]

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Exceptions to the Arabian pattern of tribal autonomy occurred where settled powers were in a position to exert more direct control over the tribes. Usually this was at the north and south ends of the Peninsula, where agricultural resources provided the surpluses required for the formation of political elites. Because it is just such hierarchical societies that tend to produce written records, almost all of our evidence for Arabia before Islam (when the central Arabians themselves established just such a hierarchical – and hence literate – state) derives from settled states on the periphery of Arabia. Herodotus' account is one example of such non-Arabian material, but it is very unusual in that it discusses nomadic Arabians outside the direct influence of settled powers. The majority of texts relating to alliance and allegiance refer instead to relations between central Arabians and the more socially stratified powers in the south of the Peninsula and in the Fertile Crescent, to the north.

The settled powers of the Fertile Crescent often sought to extend their power south into Arabia, either in an attempt to control trade, or simply to provide security against nomads' raids. One example of such an attempt is found in a set of parallel texts from 649 BCE, written on prisms in the name of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (r. 668–627 BCE). They record the allegiance of a certain Yawtha^{c} mār Haza$^{\flat}$il, his leading of a revolt of the people of Arabia (*a-ri-bi*), their defeat and the fulfilment of the curses brought about by violation of Yawtha^{c}'s covenant of allegiance, pledged to the king before deities:

> Yawtha^{c}, the son of Haza$^{\flat}$il, king of Qadari, is serving the king, asking for the return of his gods. He is given Attar-shamāyīn. Later he violated his oath to me and showed no regard for my favours and threw off the yoke of dominion. He restrained his feet from asking my health and kept back from me (his gifts). The people of Arabia he incited to revolt with him, and they repeatedly plundered Amurru. My troops which dwelt in the territory of his land I dispatched against him. Their defeat they accomplished . . .Yawtha^{c}, together with the rest of the Arabians (or 'his troops who had not kept my oath') who had fled before my weapons, mighty Ira struck down. Famine broke out among them and to still their hunger they ate the flesh of their children. The curses, as many as were written in their oath, Asshur, Sîn, Shamash, Bêl, Nabû, Ishtar of Nineveh, Ishtar of Arbela, the great gods, my lords, brou[g]ht upon them suddenly.[4]

The text refers to the terms of an Assyrian vassal-oath: the pledge of allegiance before deities and the accompanying curses for violation of the oath are both mentioned.[5]

The only region within the Arabian Peninsula with the resources to support a large, settled, hierarchical society is the highland zone of South Arabia. South

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Arabian inscriptions describe the formation of religio-political communities under covenant from the beginning of the first millenium BCE:

> Yadaʿil Dhariḥ, son of Sumhuʿalay, unifier (*mukarrib*) of Sabaʾ, walled ʿAwwām, the temple of Almaqah, when he sacrificed to ʿAthtar and established a complete union by a god and a patron and by a pact and a trea[ty (*kl gwm dhʾlm wshymm wdh ḥblm wḥ*[*mr*]*m*). By ʿAthtar and by Hawbas and by] Almaqah.[6]

This inscription, from the temple of ʿAwwām, near the Maʾrib dam in modern Yemen, perhaps dates from the eighth century BCE. A number of similar inscriptions from South Arabia indicate the existence of an institution of the *mkrb*, or 'unifier' (hypothetically vocalised *mukarrib*), usually in connection with the dedication of religious monuments and the formation of political communities under the authority of deities; ancient South Arabia had sufficient resources for an elite to construct temple buildings and to make political claims over others through covenants of 'union' (*gw*).[7]

All three texts from the first millenium BCE are examples of the covenant formulas that expressed alliance and allegiance in the ancient Near East. Indeed, the forms for the expression of political contracts tend to be very conservative indeed, as the evidence for similar pacts in Arabia on the eve of Islam, 1,000 years after Herodotus, indicates.

ALLIANCE IN LATE ANTIQUE ARABIA

For most sixth- and seventh-century Arabians, as for their ancient ancestors, the only source of protection for the individual was tribal affiliation and the capacity of one's tribe to seek vengeance as redress for wrongs. Alliances allowed the obligations that united the individual tribes, or 'co-liable groups', to be extended more widely in order to strengthen protection for members of the pact or alliance, either by confirming blood relationships, or by binding non-relatives into the 'co-liable group'. They also permitted temporary unity for specific common aims, such as military or economic cooperation. Thus, co-liable groups rarely matched 'tribal' groupings based purely on actual or notional agnatic descent – people who were not blood relatives were bound into the co-liable grouping by pacts and alliances.[8]

Such agreements were brokered and contracted by the leading man (*sayyid*, *raʾīs*, *amīr* or *shaykh*) of each tribe. Because the limited resources of Arabia restricted the potential for amassing the surplus wealth required to establish a political hierarchy, authority within nomad tribes tended to be balanced by the high value placed on the autonomy of its smaller sub-tribal clan and family units. Both small tribes and larger confederations depended upon more-or-less

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consultative, consensual and 'face-to-face' political customs, in which the leader's position was usually relatively precarious. The *sayyid* was 'first among equals', with a fragile authority based upon his peers' recognition of his seniority and effectiveness, and a limited capacity to coerce those who followed him. His authority could derive in part from lineage rather than reputation – *nasab* ('ancestry') rather than *ḥasab* ('deeds') – but membership of a lineage of *sayyid*s was usually no guarantee in itself of recognition as a leader.[9]

The later Arabic historical tradition preserves records of some of these pre-Islamic pacts between the sixth- and seventh-century tribes. One example is the alliance (*ḥilf*) made in *c*. 550 CE between ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim, the grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad and a leading man in the town of Mecca, and some of the neighbouring tribe of Khuzāᶜa. Such agreements were written down in 'documents' (*kutub*, sing. *kitāb*, or *ṣaḥāʾif*, sing. *ṣaḥīfa*) kept by the parties to the treaty. In Mecca they were said to have been deposited in the Kaᶜba, the shrine at the heart of the settlement. In a version recorded by Hishām b. al-Kalbī (d. 821), as transmitted by Ibn Ḥabīb al-Baghdādī (d. 859), the treaty includes an opening formula that defines the type of agreement and the names of the parties (§1 in the translation below), the stipulations of the treaty (§2), and the invocation of God as a witness (§3):[10]

§1 This is what ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib and the leaders of the Banū ᶜAmr from Khuzāᶜa, and those with them from Aslam and Mālik, made a treaty about (*mā taḥālafa ᶜalayhi*):

§2 They made a treaty for mutual help in war (*al-tanāṣur*), and mutual assistance (*al-muʾāsāt*), a uniting treaty, not a disuniting one (*ḥilfan jāmiᶜan ghayr mufarriq*); sheikhs for sheikhs, lesser men for lesser men,[11] present for absent. They made a covenant (*taᶜāhadū*) and a contract (*taᶜāqadū*) for as long as the sun is above Thabīr, as long as a camel yearns for a desert, as long as the two peaks of Akhshab stand and as long as men live in Mecca – a treaty which lasts (*ḥilf abada*) for the length of eternity; the rising of the sun increases its firmness and the darkness of the night its length. ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim [and his sons][12] contracted it (*ᶜaqadahu*), and the men of the Banū ᶜAmr, and they separated from (*fa-ṣārū yadan dūna*) the Banū al-Niḍar [b. Kināna]. ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib is obliged to [help] them [in war (*al-nuṣra*)] against each seeker for retaliation (*kull ṭālib witr*) on land or sea, plains or hilly terrain, and the Banū ᶜAmr are obliged to help ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib and his sons in war against all the Arabs [in] East and West, rough ground and plains.

§3 They made God a guarantor for that, and God is the best surety (*wa-jaᶜalū Allāh ᶜalā dhālik kafīlan wa-kafā bi'llāh ḥamīlan*).

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It is most unlikely that Ibn al-Kalbī's version of this text reproduces the original treaty; one has only to look at the variations in the versions preserved by another of his transmitters (some of which are noted in the translation above). Furthermore, later expectations about what such a document 'ought' to have looked like may have corrupted the text (after all, it was a treaty made by the Prophet's grandfather).[13] However, the numerous examples of *ḥilf* agreements in the later sources make it clear that the *ḥilf* – a covenant, or oath of alliance – was indeed the most important instrument by which different Arabian tribal groupings brokered cooperative relationships with one another. It is likely that documents were often drawn up that included formulas very similar to the ones translated above: there are a number of other references to written agreements; linguistic parallels are found in other later records of similar sixth-century Arabian agreements, as well as in some of the securely authenticated versions of early Islamic treaty documents.[14]

In a recent discussion of such *ḥilf* agreements, three main types are identified: (1) agreements for temporary cooperation for a limited time (for example, for war, or trade); (2) agreements between equals, or near-equals, for prolonged mutual cooperation (for example, between ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib and his clan and the Banū ᶜAmr, described above); (3) agreements attaching people to descent groups, usually between unequal parties (also including *walāʾ*, 'clientage', and, *jiwār*, 'becoming neighbours'). In each case, mutual security in the face of a threat was very often the purpose of the treaty, very often expressed as co-liability for vengeance for wrongs.[15]

Such agreements were confirmed by rituals and gestures. In pre-Islamic Mecca, oaths were said to have been confirmed by handclasps and the striking-together of hands.[16] Indeed, 'right hand' (*yamīn*) is a very common word for 'oath' in Arabic. (A *ḥilf* is specifically a promissory – as opposed to testamentary – oath, usually for alliance.) Another word for 'hand', *yad*, can also mean 'protection', 'help' or 'support', as it does in the document quoted above, where the parties 'separated from the Banū Niḍar' (*fa-ṣārū yadan dūna banī Niḍar*). Two near-synonyms for *taḥālafa* – 'to make a *ḥilf* together' – are derived from roots that refer to the striking or touching of hands: *aṣfaqa ᶜalā* ('to agree upon', 'to unite against') and *tamāsaḥa ᶜalā* ('to agree upon', 'to make a bargain with').[17] The gesture and its symbolism were common to other Semitic cultures: the making of a pact or treaty in the Hebrew Bible is often referred to as 'giving the (open) hand' (Heb. *yad*); the same terminology is found in Syriac;[18] Akkadian vassal-oaths also refer to the 'grasping of hands', and an Akkadian term for 'supplication', and sometimes 'submission', includes 'putting forth the hand'.[19]

The dipping of hands in the blood of a sacrificed animal and the dripping of blood on stones (as described by Herodotus) are also frequently mentioned in the later sources for late antique Arabia.[20] It is possible that this ritual may be a symbolic

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representation of the notion that 'my blood is your blood', that is, that there is a mutual obligation to avenge injury, which forms the basis of many of the agreements.[21] However, it also recalls ancient Near Eastern animal sacrifices, in which the death of the sacrifice was analogous to the fate of a perjurer.[22] In one instance, fruit juice was said to have been used instead of blood, and there are also examples of hands being dipped in salt or ash and of confederates eating together (the latter a ritual act that again recalls ancient Near Eastern precedents).[23] The agreements were sometimes made at sacred locations: as we have seen, the document recording the *ḥilf* between ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and Khuzāʿa was supposed to have been stored at the Kaʿba in Mecca; the tribe of Madhḥij is said to have taken its name from the tree by which they pledged the *ḥilf* agreement that founded their tribe.[24]

In ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib's *ḥilf*, the penalties for perjury are not recorded; it may be that there were oral elements not recorded in writing. However, the closing phrase, 'They made God a guarantor for that, and God is the best surety' (*wa-jaʿalū Allāh ʿalā dhālik kafīlan wa-kafā bi'llāh ḥamīlan*), invokes a higher power as a guarantor for the agreement. In this, it conforms to the pattern of all Near Eastern covenants for alliance, including the ancient Arabian pacts discussed above. Similar oaths before God (*Allāh*) are also mentioned in mid-to-late-sixth-century poetry.[25] Both the invocation of the sun and mountains in the formulas concerning the permanence of the agreement between ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and Khuzāʿa, and the rhyming prose in which they are couched, also imply the invocation of supernatural agency (as it would also in the seventh-century Qurʾān): pre-Islamic votive inscriptions composed as rhyming verse are extant from South Arabia and the Negev; rhyming prose was also the form in which pre-Islamic *kāhin*s, or soothsayers, were said to have made oaths and pronounced their esoteric remarks.[26]

THE *ḤILF* ALLIANCE IN PRE-ISLAMIC POETRY

The main corpus of contemporaneous evidence for sixth- and early seventh-century North Arabian culture (albeit, reaching us in a form written down in the eighth and ninth centuries) is the oral poetry of the pre-Islamic Arabians. Because alliances were crucial to a tribe's security, it is unsurprising that their poetry placed great emphasis both on loyalty to agreements and on unity in the face of external threat: success in war (*naṣr*) was to be achieved through unity (*jamāʿa*), and with the help of allies (*anṣār*). The poets often boast of their own *murūwa*, or 'masculine virtue', or that of their tribe, by vaunting their loyalty to these oaths and covenants. In the first verse quoted below a connection is made between the twin virtues of fidelity and generosity; in the second, fidelity alone is celebrated. In both cases, it is reputation and honour that are to be won through *murūwa*:

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> Faithful are they to their word when once we have pledged (*fa-minhunna al-wafāʾ idhā ᶜaqadnā*), and straight they turn to the gaming-arrows when men long for the smell of roast meat.[27]

> And when thou hast said 'Yes', then abide by it, and give thy word fulfilment: to break a promise will surely bring blame (*fa'ṣbir lahā bi-najāḥ al-qawla inna al-khulf dhamm*);
> And know that blame is a loss to the man of mark: if he shields himself not against blame, it falls upon him (*al-dhamm naqṣ li'l-fatā wa-matā lā yattaqi al-dhamm yudhamm*).
> I honour the stranger protected by covenant, and regard his right: acknowledgement of what is due is true nobility in a man (*ukrimu al-jār wa-arᶜā ḥaqqahu inna ᶜirfān al-fatā al-ḥaqq karam*).[28]

These examples can be multiplied many times: loyalty to covenants and pledges is one of the dominant themes of the poetry of pre-Islamic Arabia;[29] other poems condemn treachery.[30]

In many of these poetic references to oaths and loyalty the metaphor of 'binding and loosing' is prominent. This language is common to many different traditions, but in sixth-century Arabia, as in other cultures, it had its own particular nuances. In words commonly used with the meaning 'covenant', such as *ᶜaqd* and *ḥabl* ('knot' and 'rope'), or in terms for betrayal or perjury, such as *nakth* ('untwisting', 'splitting') and *naqḍ* ('untwisting', 'unravelling'), poets found the resources for elaborate conceits. In the two examples that follow, a covenant is represented as cloth woven together and as the secure ties to a bucket bringing water (the water symbolic of both material and spiritual benefit in Arabic, as in much Near Eastern literature):

> O Thaᶜlaba, were it not that your claims upon us from the oath of alliance have been strengthened in warp and woof by a covenant (*law-lā mā tadaᶜᶜawna ᶜindanā min al-ḥilf qad suddā bi-ᶜaqd wa-ulḥimā*).[31]

> A people who, when they conclude a covenant with their neighbour, tie the bucket's rope and tie the safety-strap above it (*qawm idhā ᶜaqada ᶜaqdan li-jārihim shaddū al-ᶜināj wa-shaddū fawqahā al-karābā*).[32]

Such expressions appear to have had ancient origins – note the appearance of *ḥbl* (cf. Ar. *ḥabl*, 'rope') for 'pact' in the South Arabian inscription of *c*. 800 BCE cited earlier.[33]

The metaphors of weaving, binding and tying in covenants echo the related

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Arabian concept that only determined and resolved action – with intention 'tied firmly' – could lead to success:

> No other men are able to undo a knot that we tie, while we can undo any knot of theirs, firmly tied though it be (*fa-mā yastaṭīᶜu al-nās ᶜaqdan nashudduhu wa-nanquḍuhu minhum wa-in kāna mubramā*).[34]

> But it is the destruction of man's actions if he do not twist them firm; and there is no good in one who twists a rope who does not twist it hard (*wa-lākinna hulika al-amr an lā tumirrahu wa-lā khayr fī dhī mirra lā yughīruhā*).[35]

Both the latter verses refer to the resolute intention of men and their tribe, particularly in war. The language used for the 'binding' of covenants recalls the 'binding' of men's resolve for united effort in battle. After all, most covenants were for mutual miltary support (*al-tanāṣur*). Indeed, the two ideas of unity in covenant and unity in war are interconnected in the following verse:

> And Kaᶜb – verily I am the son of the tribe and their sworn ally and their helper in war whenever their intention (for an undertaking) is firmly twisted (*fa-innī la'bnuhā wa-ḥalīfuhā wa-naṣīruhā ḥaythu istamarra marīruhā*).[36]

The poet boasts of his ties by blood and oath to the tribe of Kaᶜb as their *naṣīr*, their 'helper in war', when their intentions are united for action (when 'their intention is firmly twisted').

Unity in intention and action was portrayed as a particular virtue, necessary for the success of the group. When ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib and Khuzāᶜa made a treaty, they made a *ḥilfan jāmiᶜan ghayr mufarriq*, 'a uniting treaty, not a disuniting one', an idea also echoed in the poetry of al-Ḥārith b. Hishām and Suᶜda b. al-Shamardal:

> Now, after they have been killed, may you not cease to be divided with respect to your intentions, disunited in affairs (*fa-innakum an tabraḥū baᶜd qatlihim shatītan hawākum ghayr mujtamiᶜī al-shaml*).[37]

> How many of all of those collected, united together in intention, have there been before them, before they were parted (by death) (*kam min jamīᶜi al-shaml multaᵓim al-hawā kānū ka-dhālika qablahum fa-taṣaddaᶜū*).[38]

Unity (*jamāᶜa*, *ijtimāᶜ*) was necessary for both survival and success: a curse on the Muslims from a pagan poet wished disunity upon them; in mourning the

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dead of her tribe, Suᶜda b. al-Shamardal lamented that death broke up its unity, preventing them from acting together. The rhetoric of the poets reflects the ideals of a society in which oaths and covenants were often the only guarantee of cooperation and in which disunity could lead to disaster. Kinship and covenant were the basis of security:

> I saw the sons of the people of Imru'l-Qays gathering against us (*aṣfaqū ᶜalaynā*), and I said, 'We are greater in number'.[39]

In this verse, the verb for to 'gather against' also implies the handclasp (*ṣafqa*) by which such pledges were made.[40]

ALLEGIANCE IN LATE ANTIQUE ARABIA

The involvement of a more hierarchical (and thus usually settled) power in Arabia was perhaps the most important influence on social structures; a *shaykh* or *sayyid* could use the support of a state to build a more secure basis for his own authority. The wealth generated by trade or agriculture could also provide the basis for more hierarchical structures without the support of another power. More autocratic rulers are remembered as 'kings' in later Islamic tradition (*mulūk*, sing. *malik* – lit. 'king', or *dhawu al-tījān*, 'possessors of crowns'). The poetry and inscriptions indicate that this title tended to be used by those who claimed authority over more than one social group.[41] In sixth-century Arabia there were three major royal powers: the Jafnid and Naṣrid clients of Rome and Iran, respectively, led the federations of Ghassān and Lakhm in the north of the Peninsula; in the south, the once autonomous kingdom of Ḥimyar was ruled first by vassals of the Ethiopian king of Aksum, and then, after *c*. 570–5, by rulers supported by Sasanian Iran.

Where the resources of a sizeable state supported a king – either an autonomous leader, or a 'sub-king' sponsored by a more major power – he had the potential to exert power that was qualitatively different from that of a *sayyid* or *shaykh*. He had the resources to buy the military support with which to extract more wealth from his subjects and he was also in a position to patronise cultural expressions of his claims to legitimate authority – priests, poets and palaces. The Jafnids, Naṣrids and Ḥimyarites all sought to impose their authority on the nomads of the Arabian interior by a combination of ideology, patronage and the use of force: religious conversion; demands for tribute; the imposition of tax on marketplaces; alliances and agreements secured by the taking of hostages, or by the granting of privileges and payments to tribal leaders.

Hence, from the perspective of the Arabian nomad tribes, kingship tended to be associated with the loss of independence, the acknowledgement of religio-

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political authority and the paying of tax or tribute. (Indeed, some of the smaller tribal groups who declared themselves to have kings in the sixth and early seventh centuries seem to have done so as a sort of declaration of independence from existing royal authorities.[42] Pre-Islamic poetry reflects the two sides of royal power in the north of Arabia: on the one hand, resistance to royal authority is quite prominent, and many poets celebrate their independence from kings, and even boast of killing them; on the other hand, tribes sought alliances with powerful patrons, sending 'delegations' (*ifādāt*, sing. *ifāda*) to them,[43] and poets sought out the same patrons, for whom they composed panegyrics that praised their royal attributes.[44]

The praise poems place the king in the tradition of ancient Near Eastern monarchy: he is the representative of the gods or a god on earth, loyalty to whom brings the blessings of protection, justice, fertility and renewal. Rebellion against him leads to punishment and perdition. The poet al-Nābigha compared the Lakhmid king al-Nuᶜmān to a legendary version of the biblical Solomon, given authority over Mankind by God:

> This leads me to al-Nuᶜmān, who bestows favours upon the people (*faḍlan ᶜalā al-nās*) near and far.
> I have not seen his like in his deeds towards the people – nor do I exclude anyone among the nations (*al-aqwām*)
> Except Solomon, when God said to him: 'Lead Mankind and prevent it from falsehood,
> And imprison the djinns; I had only permitted them to build Palmyra with thin slate and pillars.
> And whoever obeys you (*aṭāᶜaka*), reward him for his obedience, according to how he has obeyed you, and direct him to right-guidance (*al-rashad*).
> And whoever disobeys you (*ᶜaṣāka*), punish him severely; obstruct tyrants and do not neglect blood-debts.'[45]

Elsewhere, al-Nābigha invokes the water imagery of Near Eastern monarchy in comparing the protection and generosity of al-Nuᶜmān to the destructive but fertilising flood water of the Euphrates:

> Then how indeed, the Euphrates, when his winds blow, his upper part throws up frothing water onto both the banks,
> Each roaring filled wadi lifts him up; in him carob plants and broken branches are piled up.
> Sailors take shelter from fear of him, clinging to the boats after exhaustion and anxiety.

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A day of great generosity (when) treasures of gifts (for loyalty [*nāfila*] come) from him; and the day's gift (*ʿaṭāʾ*) does not finish after the morrow.
This is the redoubling, and if you obey him well (*samaʿa bihi ḥasanan*), then I will not allude to the verses of cursing by fetters (*ṣafad*).[46]

Like the king, the river inspires fear among men in its power but is also a source of blessing and reward to a loyal subject. The performance of such panegyric can be seen as a ritualised act of homage, at which the reward of the poet was a gift-exchange mirroring that between a Near Eastern king and his vassals.[47]

Whereas the homage of tribal delegations to the northern kings must be inferred from later copies of pre-Islamic poetry and from reports in the later tradition, there is secure, contemporaneous evidence for alliance and allegiance in South Arabia in the inscriptions of the South Arabian kings. The four faces of a stele, dated to 543 CE,[48] that stood at the Maʾrib dam (about 100 miles east of Ṣanʿa, the capital of both the kingdom of Ḥimyar and the modern state of Yemen) records a number of them. It is inscribed in Epigraphic South Arabian, a Semitic language related to Arabic and Geʿez (ancient Ethiopic). It records, among other things, the rebellion of a governor, Yazīd,[49] against Abraha, the Ethiopian viceroy of Ḥimyar, and then Yazīd's return to loyalty (under the threat of force), followed by the arrival of the news of the collapse of the vitally important Maʾrib dam and the making of a series of agreements with Arab (that is, nomad) tribes to work on repairing it.

By the might and aid and mercy of al-Raḥmān and of His Messiah and of the Holy Spirit: The writer of this inscription is I, Abraha, *ʿAẓalay* of the Ethiopian king, Rumāhis Zabayaman, king of Sabaʾ, Dhū Raydān, Ḥaḍramawt and Yamnat and their nomads of the highlands and the coastal districts. Now (Abraha) composed this inscription stating that: – Yazīd b. Kabshat, when he had been appointed as governor over the Kiddat at a time when they had no governor, rebelled against him and violated his oath. He (Yazīd) rebelled, and with him were the *qayl*-princes of Sabaʾ, the *asḥrn*, Murrat and Thumāmat, Ḥanash and Marthad, as well as Ḥanīf Dhū Khalīl, and the Yazʾani, the *qayl*-princes, Maʿdīkarib b. Ṣumyafaʿ and Haʿān and their brethren, the bani Aslam.

And when he (Abraha) dispatched Gurah Dhū Zabnar in order to bring Mashriqān under the authority of the king, he was killed (by the rebels) and they took the fortress of Kadūr by storm. Then Yazīd gathered those from the Kiddat who obeyed him, and made war on Ḥaḍramawt, and took Māzin, the noble Dhamāri prisoner and retreated to ʿAbrān.

A call for help reached Abraha. He opened hostilities and gathered his troops, Ethiopians and Ḥimyarites, in their thousands, in the month Dhū Qiyāẓān of six

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> hundred and fifty-seven (542 CE). He opened hostilities and descended the two passes of Saba^{ɔ} and progressed north of Ṣirwāḥ towards Nabaṭ, in the region of ^{ɛ}Abrān. When he reached Nabaṭ, he dispatched his warriors to Kadūr Alw, Lamad and Ḥimyar, and also his generals, Waṭah and ^{ɛ}Awdah, both from the clan of Gadan. Yazīd went to see (Abraha) at Nabaṭ, and renewed his oath of allegiance to him, before (Abraha) sent his warriors against him.
>
> Saba^{ɔ}'s call for help reached (Abraha), when the dam, the ramp, dyke, the catchment basin and the sluice-gate were destroyed in the month Dhu Madhra^{ɔ}ān of year seven. After this news had reached him, he dispatched messengers so that the Arabs who had not returned with Yazīd would submit. Thereupon all of them renewed the oath of allegiance and gave pledges (of loyalty) to the messenger, while the warriors, who had been sent to Kadūr, besieged the princes, who had rebelled against him.[50]

In some respects, the language that describes the pacts recorded on the South Arabian stele recalls those found in the traditions about *ḥilf* alliances between North Arabian tribes. With the threat of Abraha's army, Yazīd returned to loyalty to him and 'renewed the oath of allegiance' (*wh^{ɛ}dhms ydhw*). On the collapse of the dam, Arab nomads also 'renewed the oath of allegiance and gave hostages' (*h^{ɛ}dw ^{ɛ}ydhmw wrhnhmw*). The renewal of the oath is expressed by the verb *^{ɛ}wd* ('to restore, renew or return', cf. Ar. *^{ɛ}āda* and *a^{ɛ}āda*) and the noun *yd* ('hand, pact, loyalty, obedience'; cf. Ar. *yad*, 'hand', 'protection', 'support' and *yamīn*, 'right hand', 'oath', 'pact', 'loyalty').

However, it is notable that the term *yd* in South Arabian implies not just covenant and alliance, but obedience and allegiance: Yazīd is understood to be a vassal of Abraha, he had 'rebelled' (*qsd*) and 'violated his oath' (*hkhlf bǧzmn*) after being 'appointed governor' (*tkhlf ^{ɛ}aly*) and was returning to a state of obedience to the king. That an identical expression is used to express the relationship of the Arab nomads to Abraha indicates that (from a Ḥimyarite perspective at least) they too were in a position of allegiance to him; the taking of hostages (*rhn*) also indicates a less equal relationship than an alliance.[51] In another sixth-century inscription a group is described as having 'made peace and submitted to the king's authority' (*slmw wsm^{ɛ}n qhtm*).[52] How far these expressions reflected the nomads' perspective, we cannot tell; the texts are written in the name of the Ethiopian viceroy. It may be that the Arabs understood their relationship to be closer to that expressed by a *ḥilf*. (It is possible that this is reflected in the more ambiguous *br*, 'promise of faithfulness', used later in the inscription of the Arabs' pledge to the king before beginning work on the dam.[53]) An 'oath' or 'pact' could reflect a spectrum of relationships: at one end, the voluntary mutual cooperation of equals under divine sanction; at the other, obedience to a powerful patron or

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lord, who might claim authority from a divine power, as Abraha did from the Christian God ('al-Raḥmān', 'The Merciful').

AUTHORITY AND THE SACRED IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

Abraha's invocation of divine authority was in a long tradition of sacral leadership in Arabia. The cults of various pre-Islamic north and central Arabian deities are attested to by inscriptions, by the writings of Greek and Roman historians and geographers (including Herodotus) and by later Islamic tradition. Late antique Arabian gods such as Allāh, Allāt, al-ʿUzza and Manāt had priests or guardians, and in north and west Arabia some tribal groups established federations on the basis of their status as priests or guardians of shrines.[54] The sacred status of these places as sacred enclaves, or *ḥaram*s dedicated to particular deities, where taboos prevented the shedding of blood, made them gathering-places for pilgrimages and markets. Tithes and sacrifices allowed their guardians to acquire material wealth as well as sacred charisma. This was probably part of the incentive for Khuzāʿa to enter into an alliance with ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, a member of the tribe of Quraysh that dominated the shrine at Mecca. Later Islamic tradition remembers the sixth century as a period of great success for the Meccan shrine; precisely what social, political or economic factors lay behind this are the subject of an as yet unresolved debate, but that it was an important cultic centre in this period is not in doubt.

Judaeo-Christian monotheists also had long-established socio-political traditions for the formation of communities beyond, or in parallel to, the authority of governments and kings.[55] The most important manifestation of this in the late antique Near East was the tradition of communal, or cenobitic, monasticism that began in Egypt in the early fourth century, soon spread from there to Syria and Mesopotamia and then to Iraq, Armenia and Ethiopia. Other traditions of pious monotheist communal life were also found in the same regions: from the fifth century, the pious, ascetic lay communities of *bᵉnai* and *bᵉnat qᵉyāma*, 'sons and daughters of the covenant', begin to appear in the Syriac sources for late antique Syria and Mesopotamia.[56] Judaeo-Christian communities were also present in Arabia: there were churches with Nestorian Christian bishops on the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula in the sixth century;[57] a significant monastic community on the margins of the Peninsula was that of the Batos at Sinai;[58] another important Christian community was at Najrān in South Arabia;[59] hermits and monks appear in the pre-Islamic poetry and in the Qurʾān.[60] There were also Jews and Christians living in the early seventh-century Ḥijāz, who may have shaped the pre-Islamic image of Allāh as a type of 'high god'.[61]

The conversion of the kingdoms on the margins of inner Arabia, largely as a result of the influence of extra-Arabian imperial powers, had contributed greater

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impetus to the spread of such Judaeo-Christian ideas into the Arabian interior. However, it also made conversion an act of more than local political consequence – Christianity and Judaism became identified with the patronage of the powers that supported them. The north Arabian allies of Rome were Christian and tribes allied to them tended to convert to Christianity; in the sixth century the palaces and churches at pilgrimage sites in the Syrian steppes were where the Ghassanids assembled their nomad allies.[62] Manichaeism and Christianity both influenced the Lakhmid allies of Iran.[63] As we have seen, the north Arabian kings' invocations of Old Testament kingship are reflected in their poetry.[64]

At the height of Ḥimyarite influence over the Peninsula, in the fourth and fifth centuries, Judaism had been used by the South Arabian Ḥimyarite kings as a potential means to transcend tribal loyalties through a concept of the 'sons of Israel'.[65] Christianity was proclaimed by the Aksumite viceroys who ruled the kingdom in the sixth century. Abraha ruled as king, 'by the might and aid and mercy of al-Raḥmān ('The Merciful') and of His Messiah and of the Holy Spirit'.[66] The Ḥimyarite capital of Ṣanᶜa, and the Maᵓrib dam, were both the locations of palaces and churches that were the physical expression of the sacred authority of the king.[67] Indeed, just as ancient South Arabian inscriptions often recorded both religio-political covenants and the dedication of a temple, the Maᵓrib inscription of 543 CE ends with the dedication of a Christian church.

It is in this context of the spread of monotheist ideas and their associated social and cultural forms into Arabia in late antiquity that the prophetic career of Muḥammad took place. He preached a version of Judaeo-Christian monotheism, but came to locate its cultic centre at the established shrine at his home town of Mecca. Muḥammad's 'recitation' (*qurᵓān*) was 'an Arabic recitation' – a religious statement of political independence from the mostly Christian imperial powers that surrounded the Ḥijāz.[68] It would prove to be by far the most successful and long-lasting synthesis of Arabian religio-political traditions and late antique monotheism. However, almost the only secure evidence for ideas about loyalty and leadership in the earliest Muslim polity is the text of the Qurᵓān itself.

NOTES

1. Herodotus, *Histories*, bk 3.8; cf. Retsö, *Arabs*, 247.
2. Ephᶜal, 'Syria–Palestine', 161–4.
3. For tribal patterns in late antique Arabia, see Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 141–5.
4. Piepkorn, *Prism Inscriptions*, 80–5, Prism B, col. vii, ll. 93–9, col. viii, ll. 1–9, 23–30; Retsö, *Arabs*, 162.
5. On which, see above, Introduction, n. 30.

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6. Tr. A. Jamme, with references, in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 663. Cf. Robin, 'Sheba. II', 1048, 1089–97.
7. Robin, 'Sheba. II.', esp. 1048ff., 1144ff., 1180ff.
8. Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 141–5.
9. Lancaster and Lancaster, 'Concepts of leadership'; Athamina, 'Pre-Islamic roots'.
10. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Munammaq*, 90–1; cf. Bal.(C), 71–2 = Bal.(D), i, 83; Waq., ii, 281–2.
11. Reading *al-aṣāghir ᶜalā al-aṣāghir*, from Bal.(C), in place of Ibn Ḥabīb's *al-aṣāghir ᶜalā al-akābir* ('lesser men for great men').
12. This and subsequent alternative readings from Bal.(C).
13. Cf. Waq., ii, 281; Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances in Islam', 7, no. 6.
14. e.g. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Munammaq*, 219, 220, 221; Bal. (C), 55–7 = Bal. (D), i, 63–5. See further Hinds, 'Kufan political alignments', 365; Hinds, 'Ṣiffīn', 107; Serjeant, 'Early Arabic prose', 128f.; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl' (C. Pellat); Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs'; Schoeler, *Oral and the Written*, 62ff.
15. Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 146–53, 162–4; for other obligations, see 153–64.
16. Serjeant, 'Early Arabic prose', 128–9.
17. Lane, s.v.; see further below, p. 35.
18. Pedersen, *Eid*, 47ff.; cf. 2 Kings 10: 15; 1 Chron. 29: 24; 2 Chron. 30: 8; Ezra 10: 19.
19. Gruber, *Nonverbal Communication*, i, 49. Cf. Ps. 88: 10; Wansbrough, *Lingua Franca*, 131.
20. See above, p. 24; Pedersen, *Eid*, 25ff.; Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 152.
21. Smith and Goldziher, *Kinship*, 56; Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 155, for references to this idea in *ḥilf* agreements.
22. *ABD*, s.v. 'Covenant' (G. E. Mendenhall, G. A. Heron), i, 1182a.
23. Pedersen, *Eid*, 24–6; Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 151. For the precedents, see *ABD*, s.v. 'Covenant' (G. E. Mendenhall, G. A. Heron), i, 1194b.
24. Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 152.
25. e.g. al-Najīrimī, *Aymān*, 13; al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍaliyāt*, i, 750, l. 3, ii, 322.
26. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 211–12, 220–2.
27. Bishr b. Abī Khāzim, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, i, 670, n.d, ii, 280, l. 35c.
28. ᶜĀᵓidh b. Miḥṣan or his nephew, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, i, 589, ll. 3–5, ii, 233.
29. e.g. Imruᵓ al-Qays, in Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, 78, §130, l. 3.
30. e.g. Rāshid b. Shihāb, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, i, 611, l. 3, ii, 247.
31. al-Khaṣafī, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, i, 627, l.13, ii, 258.
32. Jarwal b. Aws al-Ḥuṭayᵓa in praise of his tribe, cited in Jamil, 'Caliph and *Quṭb*', 21.
33. See above, p. 26.
34. al-Khaṣafī, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, i, 629, l.27, ii, 259.
35. ᶜAwf b. al-Aḥwaṣ, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, i, 353, l.18, ii, 128.
36. ᶜAwf b. al-Aḥwaṣ, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, i, 353, l.16, ii, 128; Bravmann, 'Heroic motives', 56, n. 1.
37. al-Ḥārith b. Hishām b. al-Mughīra, in IH, 519; Bravmann, 'Heroic Motives', 44–5.
38. Suᶜda b. al-Shamardal, in Bravmann, 'Heroic motives', 45.
39. al-Zuhayr, in Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, 49, §82, l. 16.

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40. For *aṣfaqa ᶜalā* as equivalent to *tabāyaᶜa ᶜalā*, see al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ᶜarūs*, s.v. *aṣfaqa*; for *aṣfaqa ᶜalā dīn* as 'to agree upon religion' in pre-Islamic Arabia, see IH, 17.
41. Athamina, 'Tribal kings'.
42. Athamina, 'Tribal kings', 24–5.
43. Ibn Muqbil, *Dīwān*, 398, no. 50, l. 5; *Lisān*, s.v. *ifāda*. Cf. Q 19.85 (*wafd*).
44. el Tayib, 'Pre-Islamic poetry', 67ff.; *EAL*, s.v. '*madīḥ*, *madḥ*' (J. S. Meisami).
45. Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, 3–4, §7, ll. 2–6.
46. Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, 4, §8, ll. 7–11.
47. Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Abbāsid panegyric'.
48. Kitchen, *Documentation*, 9; Gajda, 'Die Vereinigung Südarabiens'; but cf. Seipel, *Jemen*, 406 (549 CE).
49. On Yazīd, see Smith, 'Events', 437, n. 5.
50. Conti Rossini, *Chrestomathia*, 72–3, no. 64 = *CIH*, 541, ll. 1–55; tr. Smith, 'Events', 437–8; Seipel, *Jemen*, 406 (much more reliable). Cf. Robin, 'Sheba. II.', 1099, 1103; Retsö, *Arabs*, 561.
51. The term might mean 'pledges (of allegiance)', but 'hostages' is more likely; cf. Bashāma, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, i, 90, l. 36, ii, 27; ᶜAlī, *Taʾrīkh al-ᶜarab*, v, 633; Donner, *Conquests*, 47, 89. For hostages in Sasanian Iran, see Humbach and Skjærvø, *Sassanian Inscription*, iii.1, §94.
52. Biella, *Dictionary*, s.v. *smᶜ*.
53. Conti Rossini, *Chrestomathia*, 74 = *CIH*, 541, l. 97; tr. Biella, *Dictionary*, s.v. *brr*; cf. Beeston et al., *Sabaic Dictionary*, s.v. Cf. Ar. *birr*: Lane, s.v.; Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, s.v.
54. Donner, *Conquests*, 34–7; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 159. The absence of the pre-Islamic gods from the poetry is quite striking. Most likely, the poetry was filtered by the monotheist sensibilities of those who preserved it in Islamic times (cf. Beowulf in Christian Anglo-Saxon); the prose tradition, in contrast, sometimes reflects an antiquarian interest in the pagan gods.
55. e.g. the Qumran community of *c*. 200 BCE–70 CE: Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 26f.
56. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, i, 10ff.
57. Healey, 'Christians of Qatar', 225ff.; Abrache, 'Bible', 40.
58. *ODB*, 'Catherine, Monastery of Saint' (A.-M. Talbot), 'Sinai' (A. Kazhdan).
59. Abrache, 'Bible', 40–1.
60. Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, s.vv. *rāhib*, *ruhbān*, *et al*.; Q 5.85, Q 9.31, Q 9.34, Q 57.27.
61. Newby, *Jews of Arabia*, 49ff.; Watt, 'Belief in a "High God"', 35–40.
62. Key Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 141–73; Abrache, 'Bible', 41.
63. Abrache, 'Bible', 38–9.
64. For another unusual dimension of Arabian sacral kingship, see Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 162.
65. Robin, 'Ḥimyar, des inscriptions aux traditions'; Robin, 'Ḥimyar et Israël'.
66. *CIH*, 541, ll. 1–3; Smith, 'Events', 437; Seipel, *Jemen*, 406a.
67. Abrache, 'Bible', 40.
68. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, esp. 245–50; Retsö, 'Road to Yarmuk', esp. 39–41.

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CHAPTER

2

THE VERB *BĀYAᶜA* IN THE QURᵓĀN: ALLEGIANCE TO MUḤAMMAD

Throughout the Islamic tradition (that is, in texts composed in the eighth and ninth centuries and after) the verb *bāyaᶜa* is used to describe the taking or giving of the pledge of allegiance to the leader of the Muslims (whence the noun, *bayᶜa*, 'pledge of allegiance'). This use of a quranic word is one instance of the numerous examples of Prophetic practice assuming the status of kerygma in the Islamic tradition. In this respect, the invention of the *bayᶜa* as the means of recognising religio-political authority in the early Muslim community in some ways resembles the invention of the office of the caliphate itself, and the consultative process by which it was widely held that its incumbent should be chosen. Both the title 'caliph' (*khalīfa*) and the 'consultation' in choosing him (*shūrā*) appear to have been derived from quranic usages that suited, though did not anticipate, such institutions.[1] Where *bāyaᶜa* differs from *khalīfa* and *shūrā* is that it appears to have been not only, like *khalīfa* and *shūrā*, something of a genuine continuation of Arabian custom but also a custom actually used by the Prophet Muḥammad, albeit subsequently modified and reimagined in response to new situations; Muḥammad does not seem to have anticipated caliphs, nor the method of selecting them,[2] but he had taken pledges of loyalty from his followers, as the first caliphs did from theirs.

It is notable that this verb, *bāyaᶜa*, and etymologically related words, do not feature at all in Chapter 1's survey of alliance, confederation and leadership on the Arabian Peninsula in the sixth and early seventh centuries (whereas a similar survey would find analogues for the term *khalīfa* and at least for the root *shīn–waw–rāᵓ*, meaning 'deputy' and 'consultation', respectively). Indeed, no secure attestations of the verb, *bāyaᶜa*, and the related nouns, *bayᶜa* and *mubāyaᶜa*, are attested in Arabian languages from before the time of Muḥammad. That is, the

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words have not been found in pre-Islamic graffiti, inscriptions or poems.[3] Nor are they found in the very few examples of what purport to be copies of now lost pre-Islamic documents found in later texts. There are a few uses of the words with reference to pre-Islamic figures in much later sources, but these are probably later Islamic usages, retrospectively applied to historical events, as opposed to actual survivals of pre-Islamic language.

There are two possible explanations for this discontinuity in the evidence. First, it may be that the verb *bāyaᶜa* was already in use before Islam, and it is simply an accident of the survival of evidence that no secure attestation survives;[4] that related terms were used in connection with marriage and commerce before Islam would suggest that they could be used in political contexts, too, and there is some evidence that political agreements could be understood in commercial terms.[5] However, although arguments from near-silence are always vulnerable to new evidence, it does at least seem likely, particularly given the dramatic disjunction in the linguistic evidence, that Prophetic precedent was important in the preponderance of this term, rather than its synonyms, in naming oaths of allegiance among the early Muslims.

Unfortunately, nearly everything we know about the history of the Islamic polity in the early-to-mid-seventh century derives from sources composed in the late eighth century and after from a now lost written and oral tradition. From the historian's perspective, there are very significant evidential problems with this later material: it is not primary evidence, and it tends to reflect later generations' tendentious claims about the early Islamic period.[6] This is a problem to which we will return in Chapter 3. This chapter seeks to bypass these historiographical difficulties by taking the Qurʾān as its evidence, on the basis that the Qurʾān is the closest we will get to a primary source for the early seventh-century community in the Ḥijāz.[7]

In the Qurʾān, the verb *bāyaᶜa* (whence *bayᶜa* and *mubāyaᶜa*, 'oath of allegiance') is only one of at least nine words that denote religio-political covenant, and a comparatively rare one at that. (Others include *ᶜahd*, *ᶜaqd*, *ḥabl*, *mīthāq*, *mawthiq*, *wāthaqa*, *ḥalafa* and *yamīn*; as with the Bible, 'covenant' is the 'thematic centre' – *die Mitte* – of the Qurʾān.[8]) *Bāyaᶜa* is singled out for special attention here because of its rapid establishment as the name for an Islamic political institution: it became the main word for the oath of allegiance to Muḥammad (at least in later tradition) and then to caliphs (in actual historical practice from the 680s at the very latest).[9] Such an approach may risk retrospectively imposing semantic distinctions on quranic language that did not exist in the early seventh century. However, the verb *bāyaᶜa* does in fact seem to be used in a distinctive sense in the Qurʾān, referring to an oath of allegiance given to Muḥammad in his capacity as God's prophet. This chapter seeks to recover some of the semantic

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field of the quranic verb *bāyaᶜa* in an attempt to recover how it might have been understood by Muḥammad and his contemporaries.

THE QURANIC *BAYᶜA* IN CONTEXT

Bāyaᶜa ('to make a bargain', 'to give or receive an oath of allegiance') occurs six times, in four places, in three *sūra*s (*sūrat Barāᵓa*, or *al-Tawba*, *sūrat al-Fatḥ* and *sūrat al-Mumtaḥana*, respectively: Q 9.111; Q 48.10, 18; Q 60.12).[10] In what follows, the content and context of the four relevant Qurᵓān verses are analysed with a view to recovering some of the early significance of the verb. Intertextualities between the Qurᵓān and other late antique texts from Arabia and elsewhere in the Near East can also contribute to our understanding of what the verses may have meant in the early seventh-century Ḥijāz. Both the Qurᵓān and some of these texts also have ancient precedents, Arabian and otherwise, that also need to be considered.

The non-quranic texts fall into four main categories. First, there are those found in Chapter 1: the North Arabian poetry of the sixth and seventh centuries; epigraphy from the Peninsula; later Islamic traditions about pre-Islamic Arabia. It has long been recognised that such texts can provide useful insights into the language of the Qurᵓān; indeed the early Muslims were interested in pre-Islamic poetry in part for just this reason. As primary (or, in the case of later tradition, secondary) sources for Arabia in late antiquity, such materials are of obvious relevance.

The second type of material adduced here are the texts of late antique monotheists from Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the Near East – both the Bible itself and other materials such as saints' lives and monastic rules. Their use depends upon the premise that the Qurᵓān is substantially reflective of ideas circulating within a community of pious monotheists in the Ḥijāz in the early seventh century, on the margins of the wider Near Eastern Judaeo-Christian world, but in contact with it. According to the Qurᵓān, the believers valued prayer, alms, fasting and 'striving (including fighting) in God's cause', anticipated the Last Day and had an explicit sense of being a part of a monotheist tradition revealed by previous prophets, such as Moses and Jesus, and in other holy texts – notably the Torah and the Gospels.[11] In these things, and in many others too, the quranic community shared much with the traditions of other Near Eastern monotheist communities. Indeed, biblical material in the Qurᵓān is often mediated through the late antique Near Eastern monotheist tradition. This is suggestive of cultural contact between the late antique Ḥijāz and the wider Near Eastern world, particularly of the sort discussed in the final part of Chapter 1.

However, the Ḥijāz also had its own indigenous religious traditions, which appear to have been of very great antiquity and which are also reflected in the

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Qurʾān. For example, alongside the biblical prophets, we hear of figures unique to Arabia such as Ḥud and Ṣāliḥ. Some similarities between quranic material and the texts of late antique monotheism may therefore be a function of a genetic relationship between existing Arabian religion and other ancient Near Eastern religious traditions, and so not indicative of direct influence from outside Arabia in late antiquity. This is almost certainly the case with the ancient notion, fundamental to the *bayʿa*, of a pledge before a deity; as discussed in Chapter 1, the formation of communities by such covenants, under the leadership of a 'unifier' (Epigraphic South Arabian, *mkrb*, Ar. *mujammiʿ*) had Arabian roots going back to at least the eighth century BCE. Furthermore, the idea of religio-political covenant as the basis for state-formation was part of an even more ancient *lingua franca* of the Near East;[12] Thus the third category of evidence includes evidence both for ancient Arabia, such as Herodotus and the South Arabian inscriptions, and for the rest of the ancient Near East, such as the Hittite and Assyrian vassal oaths, which are the first extant examples of religio-political covenants in the Near East.

The fourth and final category of material to which the quranic verses are compared is a text (with variants) now usually referred to as the 'Constitution of Medina', or *ʿahd al-umma* ('covenant of the religious community'), although its opening formula simply calls it a 'document', or *kitāb*, and a later clause refers to it as a *ṣaḥīfa* ('sheet' or 'document'). The 'Constitution' was drawn up between the monotheist inhabitants of Medina and Muḥammad and his Meccan followers during the 620s, and is preserved in various versions in ninth-century Islamic tradition. Unusually, although there has been disagreement on whether the so-called 'Constitution' is a single continuous document or a composite of a sequence of such texts, modern scholars are unanimous in accepting that it substantially reflects the language used in formulating a written religio-political pact or pacts between believers in Medina during the 620s.[13] Since the 'Constitution' appears to be an authentic foundation text for the new monotheist community that formed in Yathrib/Medina after 622, it is, like the Qurʾān itself, as close as we can get to primary evidence for aspects of the ideology of that community. Furthermore, as a document in the Arabian religio-political tradition of the *ḥilf* and the *ḥaram*, it is particularly pertinent to the interpretation of the four quranic verses in which the verb *bāyaʿa* occurs.

In some respects, the 'Constitution' resembles the *ḥilf* agreements outlined in Chapter 1: it was recorded in a document, it affirms the rights and obligations of the tribal groups participating in it, especially with respect to vengeance and war, and it is guaranteed by God.[14] The 'Constitution' also establishes Medina as a sacred enclave, or *ḥaram*, with Muḥammad as its arbiter in his capacity as God's messenger. In this it resembles the Arabian custom of establishing a sacred

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space dedicated to the patron deity of a social group, such as that in the ancient inscription at ᶜAwwām, cited in Chapter 1, or the sixth-century Meccan *ḥaram* as it is desribed in the later Islamic tradition. It provides for 'a single community to the exclusion of others' (*umma wāḥida min dūni al-nās*) and prescribes cooperation between the 'faithful' (*muʾminūn*, sing. *muʾmin*), but also states that 'whatever you differ about should be brought before Allāh and Muḥammad' (*wa-innakum mahmā ikhtalaftum fīhi min shayʾ fa-inna maraddahu ilā Allāh wa-ilā Muḥammad*).[15]

In what follows, each of the three *sūra*s in which the verb *bāyaᶜa* appears is read in turn, with a view to intertextuality within the Qurʾān and with the four groups of evidence that cast light on the milieu in which it originated.

SŪRAT BARĀʾA/AL-TAWBA (Q 9.111)

> Truly God has bought from the believers their lives (*ishtarā min al-muʾminīn anfusahum*) and their wealth that they will have Paradise (*al-janna*), fighting in the way of God (*yuqātilūna fī-sabīl Allāh*), killing and being killed; a promise binding upon Him (*waᶜdan ᶜalayhi ḥaqqan*) in the Torah, the Gospels and the Qurʾān; and who is more faithful to His covenant (*ᶜahd*) than God? Rejoice, therefore, in the bargain (*bayᶜ*) that you have made (*bāyaᶜtum bihi*); that is the great victory (*al-fawz al-ᶜaẓīm*). (Q 9.111)

Later tradition sometimes referred to this as the 'jihad verse'. The content of the verse itself – 'fighting in the way of God, killing and being killed' in return for 'Paradise' – indicates that it does indeed refer to martyrdom in war. So also does its immediate context in the *sūra*, in which exhortations addressed to the reluctant to fight in return for salvation are prominent. The unwillingness of those who 'ask for exemption, and say, "Leave us: we would be with those who sit"' (Q 9.86) is contrasted with the 'Messenger and those who believe with him', who 'strive and fight (*jāhadū*) with their wealth and their persons', for whom 'God has prepared Gardens' (Q 9.88–9). The insincerity and fickleness of a group described as *al-aᶜrāb* (usually translated 'nomad Arabs') are singled out: 'They will swear to you by God (or "make an alliance with you in the name of God" [*sayaḥlifūna bi'llāh*]) . . . that you may leave them alone . . . they are an abomination and Hell is their dwelling place' (Q 9.95). In what may be an echo of the 'Constitution of Medina', there is a reference to the taking of turns in going on military expeditions (Q 9.122).[16]

Besides this context of exhortation for loyalty to oaths for jihad, two features of the verse itself are particularly notable: first, that 'holy war' is explicitly located in existing monotheist tradition – 'the Torah, the Gospels and the

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Qurʾān'; second, that the 'bargain' with God is described in distinctively commercial terms that evoke precedents in both pre-Islamic Arabian culture and Judaeo-Christian tradition.

The reference to holy war as *qitāl fī sabīl Allāh*, 'fighting in God's path' and its variants, occurs in more than twenty places in the Qurʾān.[17] It is also paralleled in the 'Constitution of Medina', one clause of which states that every believer is equally bound by peace-treaties contracted by any other believer when 'fighting in the way of God' (*qitāl fī sabīl Allāh*).[18] The word *sabīl* is found in some of the pre-Islamic poetry and in Epigraphic South Arabian,[19] but some of the closest parallels with its quranic sense are found in post-biblical Hebrew and in Syriac, where *shᵉbīl* and *shᵉbīlā* are used figuratively meaning 'way of life', including 'God's way'.[20]

This idea of 'fighting in God's path' has a very long pre-history in the Near East. It is found, for example, in biblical books of Joshua (mid-sixth century BCE) and Judith (late second century BCE).[21] War as a spiritual metaphor is found in many early and late antique Christian texts, including the treatises of the Mesopotamian Christian Isaac of Nineveh (late seventh century):

> Better for us death in the war for God, than a life of shame and baseness. If you will begin with one of the works of God, make your testament beforehand as one who has no further life in this world and as one prepared for death.[22]

Indeed, a seventh-century Armenian historian, conventionally referred to as Sebeos, wrote of actual, rather than spiritual, warfare by Armenian Christians against Persian unbelievers in the fifth century and of 'dying . . . on the divine highway' in holy war (*i veray astuatsayin poghotayin*).[23] For the Armenians, unity under God's covenant had been a potent idea in the formation of an ethnic and religious identity in the fifth century, as it was for the early Muslims in the seventh.[24] *Sūrat Barāʾa*'s holy war in God's way reflects ideas prevalent throughout the late antique Near East about holy war as both spiritual metaphor (Isaac of Nineveh) and actual war of liberation from ungodly oppressors (Sebeos).

The quranic idea of the pact for holy war is expressed in commercial language: God is understood to have 'bought' (*ishtarā*) the believers' lives (or souls) and they are instructed to 'rejoice in the bargain which you have contracted'. Both the verb *bāyaᶜa*,'to contract a bargain', and the noun *bayᶜ*, 'a bargain', are derived from the consonontal root *bāʾ–yāʾ–ᶜayn*, relating to commerce. Modifications to this basic root alter its meaning, so that *bāyaᶜa* 'to make a bargain (with another)' is the 'reciprocal', or 'third', form of the verb *bāᶜa*, 'to buy or sell'.[25]

Parallels for the commercial metaphor of the verse are found elsewhere in the Qurʾān, in *sūrat al-Naḥl* and *sūrat al-Fāṭir* (or *al-Malāʾika*):

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> Nor sell the covenant of God for a miserable price for with God is (a prize) far better for you, if only you knew (*wa-lā tashtarū bi-ᶜahdi'llāhi thamnan qalīlan innamā ᶜinda'llāhi huwa khayrun lakum in kuntum taᶜlamūna*). (Q 16.95)

> Those who recite the book of God and perform prayer and spend (*anfaqū*) of what We have provided them with, privately and publicly, they are hoping for a commerce that will never fail (*tijāratan lan tubūra*).

> For He will pay them their meed, nay, He will give them (even) more out of His bounty (*li-yūwaffiyahum ujūrahum wa-yazīdahum min faḍlihi*), for He is oft-forgiving and ready to appreciate (service). (Q 35.29–30)

The prominence of such commercial vocabulary in the Qurʾān, particularly with reference to covenant, was noted by a European Orientalist more than a century ago.[26] Its interpretation is another matter. It may be seen as straightforward social and economic evidence for late antique Mecca and Medina; after all, a prophet might address people in terms that seemed relevant to their daily lives.[27] Or it may be seen as a literary motif with no necessary relevance to daily reality. In this reading, the commercial metaphor would be used primarily because it conformed to expectations about how such ideas should be expressed in sacred literature. These expectations might have their roots in pre-Islamic Arabian culture and religion, or in monotheist scripture, or both; sometimes prophets use archaic or formulaic language for its sacred or symbolic force.[28]

In fact the Qurʾān's language is a reflection both of the actual social and economic world in which it was produced and of expectations about scripture and prophecy there. The two are very difficult to disentangle, since the pastoral and agrarian conditions in which the Bible – ultimately perhaps the Qurʾān's most important extant literary antecedent – was produced were so similar (and, indeed, geographically proximate) to those of the Qurʾān. From the perspective of the study of ideology, however, it is expectations about the literary forms of scripture and prophecy that are more significant. Indeed, this particular verse self-referentially emphasises its own place in a consistent monotheist scriptural heritage: 'a promise binding upon Him in the Torah, the Gospels and the Qurʾān'. At the same time, its imagery is also derived from distinctively Arabian cultural precedents.

To begin with Arabia. Seventh-century North Arabian audiences might have recalled the pairing in poetry attributed to ᶜAntara (fl. late sixth century):

> And my spear was the broker of the Fates (*dallāl al-manāyā*) and it rushed into its masses and bought and sold (*wa-shārā wa-bāᶜā*).[29]

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Here the reciprocity of a pact or covenant is absent. The forms of the verbs *shārā* and *bāᶜā* ('bought' and 'sold') do not have the mutuality implicit in *ishtarā* and *bāyaᶜa*, and there is no 'bargain' or 'covenant' (*bayᶜ*, *ᶜahd*). However, the abstract use of the notion of buying and selling, in the conceit of the warrior as the 'Fates' broker', indicates the existence of a metaphor of 'buying and selling' for 'giving and taking life' in sixth-century North Arabian Arabic, which is echoed in the Qurʾān's 'killing and being killed' under God's covenant.

Indeed, the idea of a bargain with Death, or Fate, was already well developed in sixth-century poetry – renown and fame were 'purchased' with one's life, or one's wealth:

> My body and soul, Umm Ḥassān – before I hand over the sale to the purchaser (*dharīnī wa-nafsī umm Ḥassān innanī bi-hā qabl allā amlika al-bayᶜ mushtar*),
> Stories will remain: and a young man who does not reach old age when he enters evening as a corpse upon great deeds (*amsā hāmatan fawq ṣayyir*).[30]

> The two al-Ḥāriths easily outsrip all others in the race to the goal, as two thoroughbred steeds keep the running entirely to themselves:
> The pair deal their wealth abroad, seeking thereby fair fame: and praise is not to be bought save by payment after payment (*wa'l-ḥamd lā yushtarā illā bi-athmān*).[31]

The sentiment is a pagan one – fame is all that outlives man; wealth is best spent in gaining renown. Indeed, life itself is a sale, handed over to a purchaser. A similar parallelism can be demonstrated between the pre-Islamic and quranic use of the root *rāʾ–hāʾ–nūn* ('pledge', 'surety', etc.).[32]

The same idea of giving one's life or soul in return for reward also appears in later Arabic–Islamic traditions about the formation of pre-Islamic Arabian religious communities. The tribe of Kinda, besieged by the Muslims in 632–3 (11 H) and realising that defeat was inevitable, were said to have said to one another:

> 'Death is better than the situation in which you find yourselves; cut off your forelocks (*juzzū nawāṣīkum*), so that you are like a people who have given your souls to God freely – may He be gracious to you, and may you return with his blessings! Perhaps He will assist you against these tyrants (*ḥattā ka-annakum qawm qad wahabtum li'llāh anfusakum fa-anᶜama ᶜalaykum fa-buʾtum bi-niᶜamihi laᶜallahu an yanṣurakum ᶜalā hāʾulāʾi al-ẓalama*).' So they cut off their forelocks and made a pact and a covenant (*wa-taᶜāqadū wa-tawāthaqū*) that no one of them would flee (*allā yafirr*) leaving the other behind.[33]

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The verb *bāyaᶜa* is not used, but a similar expression is: *qawm qad wahabtum li'llāh anfusakum*, 'a people who have given their souls to God freely', in the hope of *niᶜamihi*, 'God's blessings'. The reference to the forelock also suggests pre-Islamic practice: Herodotus mentions a similar hair-cropping ritual in the Negev 1,000 years earlier;[34] the same idea appears in biblical references to the Arabs.[35] The Qurᵓān makes no mention of the actual shaving of forelocks by the Muslims; God's grasp of his creatures' forelocks is instead a metaphor for his omnipotence, normally in the sense of punitive power.[36] However, the parallels between this material and the quranic 'bargain', in which God purchases the souls of the believers, suggest that the metaphor may have been familiar to the pre-Islamic Arabians and, if it was closely connected to the ritual of shaving the head or temples, may have been a long-standing element of pre-Islamic cultic practice in central Arabia.

The same concept appears to inform the verb *aslama*, 'to submit or surrender', 'to become a Muslim' (that is, 'one who surrenders'), which is often found paired with *bāyaᶜa* in the traditions about the early community.[37] It has been suggested that *aslama* was an abbreviation of *aslama al-nafs*, 'to surrender one's life'.[38] It might be added that another meaning for *aslama* is 'to pay in advance for something'.[39] Indeed, it is possible that *al-ᶜarab*, or the 'Arabs', the name by which the nomads of inner Arabia were known, ultimately derived from cultic practices in which they sold themselves a 'pledge' (Heb. *ᶜerabōn*, Syr. *ᶜᵉrābā*, Gk *arrabōn*) in the service of a representative of deity.[40] Again, this is a very widespread feature of ancient Near Eastern culture, in which it was axiomatic that Man was created to serve the gods,[41] but it appears to have been particularly well developed among the Arabians.

However, although the metaphorical language of verse 111 of *sūrat Barāᵓa* conforms to ancient Near Eastern cultural patterns, including those of Arabia, the verse itself also explicitly connects the 'bargain' with the 'promise' made 'in the Torah, the Gospels and the Qurᵓān'. Certainly, the nature of the 'bargain' transforms the pagan poetic conceit. In the Qurᵓān, death 'in the way of God' is a bargain that is cause for rejoicing; this life is exchanged not for fickle renown (as in the poetry), but for eternity in Paradise. The transaction recalls those commercial metaphors that do occur in the Bible, particularly that found in the gospel of Matthew, whose emphasis on the renunciation of the wealth of this world in exchange for the treasures of the hereafter was a prominent feature of the discourse of late antique Christian ascetics.[42] Matthew, like *sūrat Barāᵓa*, refers to martyrdom as the route to paradise:[43]

> Whoever wants to save his life (Gk *psuchē*, Syr. *nepshā*) will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will a person profit by winning

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> the whole world (*ti gar ōphelēthēsetai anthrōpos, ean ton kosmon holon kerdēsē*) but losing his life? Or what will a person give in exchange for his life (*ē ti dōsei anthrōpos antallagma tēs psūchēs autou*)? (Matthew 16: 25–6)

Commercial metaphors are less prominent in the Bible than in the Qurʾān, but in this biblical verse the commercial model is clear, as is the parallel with the quranic concept of 'death for the sake of God'.[44]

Where *bāyaᶜa* appears elsewhere in the Qurʾān, its commercial dimension remains implicit, but in this verse the use of *bayᶜ* ('sale', 'bargain') as a synonym for covenant and the description of God having bought (*ishtarā*) the believers bring out parallels and continuities with both pre-Islamic Arabian tradition and biblical language. The worlds of north Arabian pre-Islamic poetry, central Arabian cultic practice and the Bible intersect: ᶜAntara's spear, 'the broker of the Fates', ᶜUrwa's handing over his life 'as a sale to the purchaser' and Kinda's 'giving their lives to God' all testify to the importance of concept of the 'sale of life' in late antique Arabia; at the same time the invocation of the Torah and the Gospels gives the verse a syncretic quality, recalling the gospel of Matthew (and hence late antique monastic literature), where 'the whole world' is 'won' at the 'cost' of (eternal) 'life'.

SŪRAT AL-FATḤ (Q 48.10 AND Q 48.18)

> Verily, whoever makes a pledge to you (*yubāyiᶜūnaka*), in truth makes a pledge to God (*yubāyiᶜūna'llāh*): the hand of God is above their hands (*yadu'llāhi fawqa aydiyhim*). Whoever betrays [it] (*nakatha*) in truth betrays his own soul and whoever fulfils what he has covenanted with God, He will grant him a great reward (*ajran ᶜaẓīman*). (Q 48.10)

> Certainly God was pleased (*raḍiya*) with the believers when they made the pledge to you (*yubāyiᶜūnaka*) under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquillity (*sakīna*) for them, and rewarded them with a nearby victory (*fatḥan qarīban*). (Q 48.18)

As in *sūrat Barāʾa*, the verb *bāyaᶜa* is used in *sūrat al-Fatḥ* in a context that suggests a military expedition. Again, *al-aᶜrāb* ('nomad Arabs') are singled out: 'You shall be summoned against a people given to vehement war . . . then, if you show obedience (*tuṭīᶜū*), God will grant you a goodly reward, but if you turn back, as you did before, He will punish you with a grievous penalty' (Q 48.16). The 'blind', the 'lame' and the 'ill' are exempt from military obligations, but not from obedience to God and His Messenger (Q 48.17). The reciprocity of the verb

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is reflected in the sense that this is indeed a 'bargain': 'a great reward' is given to the loyal (Q 48.10); in verse 19, 'much war booty' (*maghānim kathīra*) is linked to the 'nearby victory' mentioned at the end of verse 18. In a very close parallel to verses 81–3 of *sūrat Barāʾa*, 'those who lagged behind' (*al-mukhallafūn*) demand a share of booty, but are refused (Q 48.15). While the spiritual reward of Paradise is emphasised in *sūrat Barāʾa*, the temporal reward of the spoils of war have a more prominent place in *sūrat al-Fatḥ*, but both *sūra*s describe a reciprocal 'bargain' made for loyalty in war. In verses 10 and 18, however, two more of the features of a loyalty oath are present: penalties and rewards are named and the gesture by which the pledge is taken is mentioned (as is its location).

Reward for obedience is paired with punishment for disobedience: 'Whoever betrays [the covenant] (*nakatha*) in truth betrays his own soul' (*fa-man nakatha fa-innamā yankuthu ʿalā nafsihi*). Again, the language resembles that of the near-contemporaneous 'Constitution of Medina': 'But whoever acts unjustly and sins will only destroy himself [or "his soul"] and his agnates' (*illā man ẓalama wa-athima fa-innahu lā yūtighu illā anfusahu wa-ahl baytihi*).[45] In both texts, violation of a covenant guaranteed by God leads to the betrayal or destruction of the 'self' or 'soul' (though the curse is not explicitly extended to relatives in the Qurʾān; indeed an emphasis is placed on the individual's responsibility before God).[46]

Such penalty clauses had very ancient precedents. The violation of Hittite and Assyrian treaties was often punished by a deity's destruction of a person. Often, as with the Constitution, the curse extended to his family and descendants, too:

> Should Duppi-Tessub not honor these words of the treaty and the oath, may these gods of the oath destroy Duppi-Tessub together with his person, his wife, his son, his grandson, his house, his land and together with everything he owns.[47]

> Whoever transgresses this agreement, ^{d}IM, Shamash and Ishhara, and all the (other) gods will destroy him.[48]

Similar oath-formulas recur throughout Near Eastern culture and are found in many late antique texts besides the Qurʾān and the 'Constitution': Augustine of Hippo (d. 430 CE) wrote of the rule of wicked men that 'they lay waste their own souls by their greater licence in wickedness' (Lat. *qui suos animos vastant scelerum maiore licentia*);[49] similar ideas also circulated in Sasanian Iran and in seventh-century Armenia.[50]

A particularly close parallel to the quranic text, in which destruction of the soul is the consequence of violation of a communal religious vow, is found in a rare record of the pledge made by monks when they left secular life. It appears in

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the *Life* of Shenoute (*c*. 348–*c*. 464 CE) and was taken by initiates at a monastery in Upper Egypt:

> If I transgress what I have agreed to, I will see the kingdom of heaven, but will not enter it since God, in whose presence I have established the oath, will destroy my soul and my body in fiery Gehenna because I transgressed the oath I established.[51]

A similar nexus of ideas, combined with a commercial–theological vocabulary also familiar from the Qurʾān, is also found in the Bohairic *Life* of Pachomius (d. *c*. 346):

> He who makes progress in the *Koinonia* with purity, obedience, humility, and submissiveness, and puts no stumbling-block or scandal before anyone by his words or his acts, that one will grow rich forever in imperishable and enduring riches. But should he be negligent, and should a soul be scandalized by him and perish from it, woe to that man; not only has he lost his soul and the troubles he took on himself, but he will also have to render account to God for that soul he scandalized.[52]

Again, the monastic material alludes to the gospel of Matthew:

> Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Fear him rather who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10: 28)

Thus, both the Qurʾān and the 'Constitution of Medina' present oaths made before God in terms common to the ancient and late antique Near East. However, there are particularly close resemblences to the surviving examples of monks' pledges to their leaders from fifth-century Egypt and to the monotheist scripture from which these oaths derived.

That the quranic pledge was contracted by a hand gesture is suggested by the phrase 'the hand of God is above their hands' (although other explanations are possible).[53] The phrase recalls the numerous precedents for similar gestures for acknowledging authority and for the taking of vows before deities in the Near East in general and in Arabia in particular. As described in Chapter 1, *ḥilf* agreements and other pacts were said to have been made by touching, striking or clasping hands in the sixth-century Ḥijāz.[54] (The presence of the 'tree' in verse 18 also recalls later accounts that describe trees and stones as sacred locations where pledges were made in pre-Islamic religion.[55]) Inscriptions indicate that oaths of allegiance were given to the South Arabian kings by a similar gesture.[56] The same

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idea is also found at the northern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, in late antique Mesopotamia, where 'making a promise', or 'submitting to authority', can be expressed in Syriac by the phrase *yaḥb īdā*, 'to proffer the hand'.[57]

Given the commercial symbolism of the language in which the pledge is described in the Qurʾān, the hand gesture recalls the classical Arabic usage, *yadī laka rahn*, 'my hand is a surety for you' (and thus also the South Arabian 'hostage pledges', *rhn*, found in the Ḥimyarite inscriptions that record oaths of allegiance).[58] It is also worth noting that in Akkadian, the ancient Semitic language to which Arabic is closely related, terms relating to the idea of a 'guarantee' or 'pledge' include *qātatam ṣabātu*, 'to grasp hands';[59] Akkadian terms for 'submission' and 'supplication' include 'putting forth the hand (to receive alms)' (*qāta tarāsu*).[60] The semantic overlap between commercial and political language, and its gestural analogues, had very ancient Near Eastern roots that reappear in Judaeo-Christian texts and, perhaps even more prominently, in pre-Islamic religio-political custom.

That 'God's hand is above their hands' implies that Muḥammad is acting as God's representative. (The context of the verses makes it clear that it is 'God's Messenger' who is receiving the pledges.[61]) Furthermore, the idea that the Prophet stands as a physically present representative of the one true God is explicit in the verse's oath formula: 'Verily, whoever makes a pledge to you (*yubāyiᶜūnaka*), in truth makes a pledge to God (*yubāyiᶜūna'llāh*).' The 'presence' of God – perhaps in support of the Muslims in battle – may also be referred to in the word usually translated as 'tranquillity' in verse 18 (*sakīna*).[62] The idea that a leader stood as the representative of the Deity – and gained victory through Him – was widespread in the ancient and late antique Near East. In conceptual terms, as well as in its context of military service, this recalls the oath taken by recruits into the late Roman army, cited in the Introduction, where loyalty to the Roman emperor was pledged, 'as though . . . to God in bodily presence (*tamquam praesenti et corporali Deo*)', to an emperor, 'who reigns at God's behest'.[63] For a strictly monotheist ruler, entering into any political covenant required the other party's conversion to the one true god. Would-be allies of the Roman emperor also had to convert to Christianity and recognise the unique status of the emperor as the representative of God on earth (which helps to explain the conversion of the Ghassanids to Christianity).[64] Verses 10 and 18 of *sūrat al-Fatḥ* make very similar claims for Muḥammad.

SŪRAT AL-MUMTAḤANA (Q 60.12)

> O Prophet! When believing women (*al-muʾmināt*) come to you making a pledge to you not to (*yubāyiᶜnaka ᶜalā an lā*) associate anything with God, nor steal, nor

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> commit fornication, nor kill their children, nor bring out falsehoods that they have slanderously invented between their hands and their legs, nor disobey (*yaᶜṣīna*) you in what is right (*maᶜrūf*), take the pledge from them (*fa-bāyiᶜhunna*) and ask forgiveness for them from God. Truly God is forgiving and merciful. (Q 60.12)

The last two of the six quranic instances of the verb *bāyaᶜa* occur in verse 12 of *sūrat al-Mumtaḥana*, often referred to as the 'pledge of the women' (*bayᶜat al-nisāʾ*). The later tradition links the verse to various events, including pledges by non-combatant men.[65] It is indeed the only place in the Qurʾān where the verb *bāyaᶜa* is not linked to a pledge for obedience in war.

Unlike the previous verses, there is little intertextuality here with the 'Constitution of Medina'. The primary concern of the 'Constitution', like a *ḥilf* agreement, is security, and therefore questions of vengeance and war dominate its clauses. Only the term for believers (masculine in the 'Constitution', *muʾminūn*, feminine here, *muʾmināt*) and the term *maᶜrūf*, 'what is customary, accepted, or right', are common to both texts. In the 'Constitution' the customs are those of war and vengeance; what *maᶜrūf* refers to in this *sūra* is less clear. In both the Qurʾān and the 'Constitution' the use of *maᶜrūf* perhaps suggests the limits of Muḥammad's authority – obedience to him is qualified by the notion of established precedent and custom.

Again, the most immediate parallels for verse 12 of *sūrat al-Mumtaḥana* are similar communal vows among early Christians, for whom obedience to God was comparable to obedience to a monarch (as it was for most ancient Near Eastern peoples).[66] The terms themselves recall those of the communal vows of the early Christians, as in the famous letter of Pliny to Trajan in 112 CE:

> They had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately amongst themselves as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath (*sacramentum*), not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it. After this ceremony it had been their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind; but they had in fact given up this practice since my edict, issued on your instructions, which banned all political societies.[67]

More proximate to sixth- and seventh-century Arabia are the vows, already referred to, said to have been taken by Christian monks in fifth-century Upper Egypt:

> Thus, each person spoke as follows: In the presence of God, in his holy place, I confirm what I have spoken and witness by my mouth. I will not defile my body

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> in any way; I will not steal; I will not bear false witness; I will not lie; I will not do anything deceitful secretly.[68]

The lists of prohibitions found in monastic rules from Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia also provide many parallels.[69]

In the case of the terms of the pledge in verse 12 of *sūrat al-Mumtaḥana*, little seems out of place in broad, Near Eastern 'monotheist' terms: the prohibition of stealing, fornication and lying are all identical with the Christian vows (and their ultimate derivation from the ten commandments is clear). However, one might note both the distinctive prominence of the pledge 'not to associate anything with God' (*an lā yushrikna bi'llāh shayʾan*) and 'not to kill their children' (*wa-lā yaqtulna awlādahunna*) in the 'pledge of the women'; that is, the oath is distinguished by one of the major rhetorical concerns of the Qurʾān (although by no means one unique to it – the quranic injunction resembles the first and second commandments) and by a concern quite particular to early seventh-century Arabia – child-killing – that intrudes elsewhere in the Qurʾān on lists otherwise identical with biblical prophetic precedent.[70] The pledge 'not to disobey in what is right' (*maʿrūf*) is also distinctive, and may reflect a pre-Islamic Arabian concept of customary right-practice; in contrast, obedience as a slave (Gk *doulos*) is central to the late antique monastic vows.[71]

CONCLUSIONS

Four conclusions arise from the quranic use of the verb *bāyaʿa*. First, the verb *bāyaʿa* referred to a religio-political covenant contracted before God, and subject to his reward and sanction. As we have seen, the pledged agreement before a deity or deities was an ancient and ubiquitous feature of Near Eastern religio-political culture. Very early evidence for Arabian covenants is found in Herodotus and in the inscriptions from South Arabia. The sixth- and seventh-century custom of the *ḥilf* (and the related customs of *walāʾ* and *jiwār*) and of the *ḥaram*, or sacred enclave, resemble these ancient precedents. Pledges of allegiance to kings also took place before a deity, as the poetry addressed to the Lakhmid kings and the inscriptions of the South Arabian monarchs makes clear. All these covenants were given by the 'hand' (Epigraphic South Arabian, *yd*, Ar., *yamīn*, *yad*), which in Arabic and Epigraphic South Arabian, as in other Semitic languages, was synonymous with an oath, pledge, surety or covenant.

In the quranic pledges, as in other Arabian and ancient Near Eastern oaths, a reciprocal exchange was integral to the pledge: fulfilment (*wafāʾ*) was rewarded with blessing (*niʿma*) or reward (*ajr*), and disobedience (*maʿṣiya*) or violation (*nakth*) with punishment (*ʿadhāb*). The parallels with late antique monastic vows

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are particularly notable, in which pledged agreements lead either to the rewards of heaven or to damnation and punishment. One might also posit a tension between the language of the 'Constitution of Medina', in which the penalty clause, as in some ancient Near Eastern vassal-oaths, imperils the family of the oath-taker and the quranic emphasis on solitary, personal responsibility before God.

Second, it was a pledge of loyalty or obedience to the Prophet in person as God's representative. That the *bayᶜa* was given to Muḥammad in person does not in itself mark it out from a *ḥilf* agreement; Muḥammad might merely have had the status of a *shaykh* or *sayyid* – that is, the representative of his 'co-liable group' (in this case the monotheist community, or *umma*) – and the martial tone of two of the three *sūra*s in which the verb *bāyaᶜa* is used might recall the choosing of a temporary leader (*amīr* or *raʾīs*) in time of war.[72] However, his status as God's messenger (*rasūl*) and His prophet, or representative (*nabī*), suggests an unequal, if still reciprocal, pledge: 'Those who pledge allegiance to you, in truth pledge allegiance to God' (Q 48.10). Verse 12 of *sūrat al-Mumtaḥana* makes it clear that Muḥammad should not be disobeyed in 'what is right, or customary' (*maᶜrūf*) and again suggests his elevated status – perhaps analogous to his role as arbiter in the 'Constitution of Medina'. The prominence of the motifs of salvation and damnation and the reference to the 'divine presence' (*sakīna*), as well as the use of the verb *bāyaᶜa* in the non-martial context of *sūrat al-Mumtaḥana*, also all mark out the *bayᶜa* as something different from the simple election of a military commander and closer to the recognition of the divinely sanctioned authority of a king or priest.

Third, it was either a pledge for non-combatant piety or, perhaps more usually, a pledge for pious obedience in war. In the former, non-combatant case, 'piety' was defined in terms characteristic of late antique ascetic movements, although with some distinctive emphases. Modern studies of monasticism have attemped to relate the particular questions of discipline that concerned the Egyptian desert fathers to the social background of their monks,[73] but what it more significant here is that, as with the terms of the oath to Shenoute, the 'pledge of the women' (Q 60.12) reflects existing Judaeo-Christian tradition as applied to late antique problems. Hence, there are also parallels with the oaths taken by Pliny's early second-century Christians. Biblical patterns underlie all three texts, as does ancient Near Eastern precedent in general. However, in the 'pledge of the women' particular quranic concerns are prominent ('polytheism' and the killing of children).

In contrast, the other four uses of the verb *bāyaᶜa* occur in a martial context. Indeed, the later Islamic tradition remembers the women's *bayᶜa* as distinctive for its lack of commitment to mutual defense; the standard, men's, *bayᶜa* was a commitment to loyalty in war. In this respect the *bayᶜa* conforms to existing

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ideas about pacts and covenants in Arabia and the rest of the Near East. Pledges for mutual defence were fundamental to life on the Arabian Peninsula and the Medinan polity could not have survived without them. In the *ḥilf,* the duty to defend one another and seek blood-vengeance were fundamental; similarly, the South Arabian inscriptions furnish examples of pledges taken for obedience to kings in war. However, this pledge for loyalty in war was given a distinctive monotheist aspect through the concept of *qitāl fī sabīl Allāh*, 'fighting in the cause of God', and the idea of salvation (*al-janna*) as a reward for death on the battlefield (Q 9.111). In this it echoes the military oath (*sacramentum*) of the later Roman empire and recalls Armenian articulations of monotheist holy war under God's covenant.

Finally, the derivation of *bāyaᶜa* from a consonantal root associated with buying and selling is understood in the Qurʾān itself to contribute to the meaning of the word: God 'bought' (*ishtarā*) the believers' lives and wealth for his service; in return, the 'bargain' (*bayᶜ*) was that they would gain heaven in the next world and the spoils of war in this (Q 9.111, 48.10 etc.). Although it is not made absolutely explicit at Q 9.111 that a 'pledge of allegiance' is being described – the verb could be understood merely to mean a 'bargain' in a more general sense – both context and content suggest that it is indeed a pledge of allegiance. First, in a parallel with verse 10 of *sūrat al-Fatḥ*, verse 111 of *sūrat Barāʾa* appears in the context of a discussion of military loyalty, in which less loyal warriors are berated for their reluctance. Second, it is made explicit that this is a discussion of 'God's covenant', as it is also at Q 48.10, where the covenant with God is made 'at the hand' of Muḥammad; one might compare Q 16.95, where the commercial metaphor for God's covenant is also made explicit.

It is, of course, true that the gesture made at the *bayᶜa* was identical with that made in contracting a sale, and that this alone might be sufficient to explain the use of the word. However, this was a gesture shared with the *ḥilf* and other political covenants; indeed, intertextuality between the language of commercial and political covenant is a feature of Semitic culture, as of others too. The covenant was a guarantee of mutual 'trust' or 'faith' (Gk *pistis*, Ar. *amāna*) betweeen the oath-taker and God at the hands of His Prophet, with analogues across ancient and late antique Near Eastern culture. Likewise, the commercial terms in which the pledge could be understood were not without precedent in Near Eastern monotheism, and particularly in late antique monasticism: again, the monks' vows lead us to the gospel of Matthew. It is clear that similar monotheist ideas are present in the Qurʾān, as they were in late antique Judaeo-Christian texts. However, it is evident from the poetry of ᶜAntara and ᶜUrwa that this metaphorical sense of 'sale' was well developed in sixth-century Arabic; the account of Kinda 'giving' their lives to God in the hope of victory in war in 632–3 also understands the

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pledge before a deity in very similar terms; the semantic field of *islām* itself has a commercial dimension. The commercial–political terminology of the Qurᵓān is part of a wider Near Eastern pattern, but has particular sixth- and seventh-century Arabian resonances.

In societies where the capacity to coerce is limited (as is always the case with pre-modern societies that include nomads) pledges and oaths take on great social and cultural significance. The pre-Islamic poetry leaves no doubt as to the importance of oaths in idealised conceptions of leadership and masculinity in North Arabia. The poems and inscriptions produced for the Jafnids, Lakhmids and Ḥimyarites also indicate the importance of oaths of allegiance in asserting claims to obedience (Ar. *ṭāᶜa* or *samᶜ*). However, Muḥammad was neither a king, nor merely a *shaykh*; his status instead derived from his charismatic authority as a 'holy man', or 'prophet', perhaps also as a *mujammiᶜ*, or 'unifier'. It is this distinctive sacred status that explains the *bayᶜa*. In the quranic *bayᶜa* we have a ritual that combines ancient Arabian ideas of covenant before a patron deity, confirmed by a handclasp, with genetically related ideas about covenant found in late antique Christianity. The *bayᶜa* also unites the pre-Islamic rhetoric of unity for success in war (God, it is worth remembering, is *khayr al-nāṣirīn*, 'the best of allies in war' [Q 3.150]) with parallel monotheist ideas about martyrdom and pious self-sacrifice in God's cause. It was a potent ideological combination that helped the Ḥijāzī polity to survive the death of its Prophet.

NOTES

1. Watt, 'God's caliph'; Crone, '*Shūrā*', 3, 9–10.
2. Even if the Shiᶜite tradition is accepted, in which Muḥammad designated ᶜAlī to succeed him, he could not have anticipated the development of the political institution of the caliphate.
3. Harding, *Index and Concordance*; Beeston et al., *Sabaic Dictionary*; Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*; Zammit, *Qurᵓānic Arabic*. Cf. ᶜAlī, *Taᵓrīkh al-ᶜarab*, v, 206–7.
4. Thus Bravmann, '*Bayᶜa* "homage"', but he provides no pre-Islamic examples.
5. For pre-Islamic usages, see above, n. 3. Waq., ii, 840, refers to a *ḥilf* being concluded by the touching of the hands as two 'merchants' (*bayyiᶜān*) touch hands. For non-Arabian parallels for this semantic and conceptual overlap, see Benveniste, *Indo-European Language,* 80ff.; Wansbrough, *Lingua Franca*, 131–2.
6. See above, pp. 21–2.
7. On the date of the Qurᵓān, see above, pp. 22–3.
8. Cf. *ABD*, s.v. 'Covenant' (G. E. Mendenhall, G. A. Herion), i, 1201b.
9. The noun *bayᶜa* was eventually adopted into Syriac: in a Syriac text of *c*. 680, the Syriac expression for giving allegiance is used of the pledge to the caliph (see below, p. 87); in the *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, of *c*. 775, a borrowing from the Arabic *bayᶜa* is used: Harrak, *Chronicle of Zuqnīn*, 145, *s.a.* 655–6.

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10. *bayᶜ*, 'commerce' or 'bargain', occurs seven times; *biyaᶜ*, 'churches', once; *tabāyaᶜa*, 'to bargain with one another', once. Only one of these terms refers to religio-political covenant (*bayᶜ*, in Q 9.111, discussed below).
11. Donner, *Narratives*, esp. 64–122; Donner, 'From believers to Muslims'.
12. See above, Introduction, n. 30.
13. The most recent and comprehensive edition, translation and discussion is Lecker, *Constitution*.
14. Lecker, *Constitution*, 8, 37, §43.
15. Lecker, *Constitution*, 7–9, 32–9.
16. Cf. Lecker, *Constitution*, 8, 34, §20.
17. AB, s.v. *sabīl*.
18. Lecker, *Constitution*, 8, 34, §19.
19. Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, s.v.; Biella, *Dictionary*, s.v.
20. Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, 162; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Sabīl' (C. E. Bosworth); *EQ*, s.v. 'Path or Way' (D. V. Frolov).
21. Joshua, 22: 5 (Heb. *derek*); Judith, 13: 20 (Gk *eutheias*).
22. Morony, *Iraq*, 476–7.
23. Abgaryan, *Patmutᶜiwn Sebeosi*, 65; Sebeos, *Armenian History*, i, 2. *Poghotay* is a borrowing from the Greek *plateia*, which appears in the Septuagint about fifty times, usually for the Hebrew *rᵉchōb*; *chanaparh* is more common in biblical Armenian (e.g. Numbers 20: 17, *et al*.). My thanks to Tim Greenwood for his help with the Armenian.
24. Eḷishē, *History*, 9–10 *et passim*.
25. Bravmann, '*Bayᶜa* "homage"', and *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Bayᶜa' (E. Tyan), provide two alternative etymologies; however, the evidence of the Qurʾān suggests that the root was understood in commercial terms by the early seventh century.
26. The two most prominent themes are 'accounting' and 'buying and selling'. e.g. *ḥisāb* occurs more than thirty times, always with the sense of 'reckoning', or 'account'; *tijāra* ('traffic, merchandise, or commerce . . . seeking of gain by buying and selling') occurs nine times: AB, s.vv.; Lane, s.vv; Torrey, *Commercial–Theological Terms*, *passim*.
27. Torrey, *Commercial–Theological Terms*; cf. Crone, 'Quranic pagans'.
28. See, e.g., Rippin, 'Commerce of eschatology'. Some Arabian precedents for the Qurʾān's commercial vocabulary were noted by Torrey, *Commercial–Theological Terms*, 39.
29. Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, 126, §113, l. 7.
30. ᶜUrwa b. al-Ward, in Nöldeke and Müller, *Delectus*, 36; cf. Torrey, *Commercial–Theological Terms*, 39.
31. Ḥājib b. Ḥabīb al-Asadī, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, i, 726, ll.11 and 12, ii, 310, and n. 12.
32. Cf. al-Aswad b. Yaᶜfur, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, i, 447, ll. 6, 7, ii, 161; Q 52.21; Q 74.38.
33. Ṭab., i, 2007; tr. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, x, 183–4 (F. M. Donner), with slight amendments.
34. See above, p. 24, and Retsö, *Arabs*, esp. 247–8, 608–9.
35. Retsö, *Arabs*, 178–80.
36. Q 11.56; Q 55.41; Q 96.15, 16.
37. See below, pp. 63–4.
38. Bravmann, 'Spiritual Background', esp. 8ff.
39. Lane, s.v.
40. Retsö, *Arabs*, esp. 597ff.

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41. e.g. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 68b, ll. 30–1; Genesis, 50: 17, *et al*.; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 345, on Deut. 6: 13; Jewett and Kotansky, *Romans*, 6: 16–17.
42. e.g. Matthew 19: 21; Athanasius, *Life of Anthony*, 31 *et passim*.
43. Cf. Q 52.21; Q 74.38.
44. Cf. 'the wage (Gk *opsōnion*) of sin' (Romans 6: 23); the penalty that is 'paid' (Isaiah 40: 2); God's sale of gold, robes and oil (Revelation 3: 18).
45. Lecker, *Constitution*, 8, 35, §28; cf. ibid., 148 and n. 46.
46. Q 52.21.
47. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 205.
48. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 532.
49. Augustine, *City of God*, bk 4.3.
50. Shaked, 'For the sake of the soul'; Sebeos, *Armenian History*, i, 93.
51. Leipoldt, *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita*, iii, 20 (no. 6), tr. Krawiec, *Shenoute*, 21; cf. Kuhn, 'Fifth-century Egyptian abbot', pt 2, 175; Bell, *Life of Shenoute*, 9–10.
52. Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 99.
53. Cf. Exodus 6:1, 7:4, *et al*.; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, xxvi, 43.
54. See above, p. 28.
55. See above, p. 29, and Ch. 1, n. 24.
56. See above, pp. 34–5.
57. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum*, s.v. *yaḥb*.
58. Lane, s.v. *rahn*; *Lisān*, s.v. *rahn*, citing al-Azharī (d. 980). On *rahīn* and *rahīna* in the Qurᵓān, see above, n. 32.
59. Wansbrough, *Lingua Franca*, 131.
60. Gruber, *Nonverbal Communication*, i, 49.
61. Q 48.8; Q 48.12.
62. Hawting, 'Origins of the Muslim sanctuary', 41 and n. 73.
63. See above, p. 6.
64. e.g. the treaty made with Kinda or Ghassān cited in *BASIC*, I.i, 8.
65. Stern, 'Muḥammad's bond'.
66. e.g. Romans 6: 13; Jewett and Kotansky, *Romans*, 409.
67. Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 294, bk 10.96.
68. Leipoldt, *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita*, iii, 20 (no. 6); tr. Krawiec, *Shenoute*, 20–1; cf. Kuhn, 'Fifth-century Egyptian abbot', pt 2, 175; Bell, *Life of Shenoute*, 9–10.
69. Pachomius, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 171ff.; Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, *passim*.
70. Cf. Q 6.137, which occurs in a sequence of verses that, on the one hand, seem to reflect aspects of actual Ḥijāzī practice, but that occur in the context of a *sūra* concerned largely with monotheist prophetic precedent, on the other.
71. Romans 6: 16; Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 19, §1, 20, §5, §6, 140, §11, 96, §10.
72. Nagel, 'Authority', 183; Athamina, 'Pre-Islamic roots', 10–11.
73. Krawiec, *Shenoute*, 3, n. 5, 21–2, n. 79.

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CHAPTER

3

THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE IN THE 'CONQUEST SOCIETY' (*c.* 628–*c.* 660)

The thirty-two years between *c.* 628 and *c.* 660 witnessed the spectacular military and diplomatic success of the monotheist polity that had been founded after Muḥammad's emigration from Mecca to Yathrib (later Medina) in 622. In the last few years of his life (*c.* 628–32) Muḥammad consolidated his authority over Yathrib/Medina, brought most of the Ḥijāz into federation and began to extend his influence to other parts of the Arabian Peninsula. During the next three decades, those who succeeded him presided over the conquest of the rest of the Peninsula, the defeat of Sasanian Iran and the annexation of the Roman provinces of Egypt (Ar. *Miṣr*) and Oriens (Ar. *Bilād al-Shām*, often referred to as 'Syria'). Then, with the slowing of military expansion in the 650s, consensus over the leadership of the Muslim polity began to break down, culminating in the civil war of 656–61, after which Damascus, in Syria, eclipsed Medina as the new capital of the empire.

During these three decades of spectacular expansion and conflict many of the religio-political institutions of the early Muslim empire came into being, among them the 'caliphate' (*khilāfa*) and the 'pledge of allegiance' (*bayᶜa*, *mubāyaᶜa*), by which the caliphate's incumbent was recognised as the 'commander of the faithful' (*amīr al-muʾminīn*) or 'caliph' (*khalīfa*, 'successor' or 'deputy'). The quranic evidence, and other evidence for the milieu in which Muḥammad lived and preached, indicate that these pledges were a fusion of long-standing, pre-Islamic religio-political custom with late antique monotheist ideas about leadership and authority. In this chapter, the evidence of the extant, ninth- and tenth-century Islamic tradition for pledges of allegiance to Muḥammad and for pledges taken by the first caliphs in the period 632–60 is assessed.

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Three main types of early seventh-century agreement are described as *bayᶜa*s in the tradition. All of them are recognitions of the religio-political authority of the Prophet or his successors: (1) an act of religious conversion and political allegiance by a group joining the *umma*; (2) an affirmation of loyalty from a group already part of the *umma*, usually before a battle or other potentially hostile confrontation; (3) a ritual of accession, whereby the members of the *umma* recognised a new leader. Of the three types of agreement, only the first two took place in the time of the Prophet; all three occurred under the caliphs. What the later tradition says is outlined, with a focus on events that we can be reasonably confident did take place and on elements of early Islamic practice that resemble pre-Islamic custom. For clarity, the tradition's *hijra* dates (in lunar years from the Prophet's 'emigration' from Mecca to Medina) are sometimes cited alongside the Christian Era dates; all the chronology should be taken as more relative than absolute.

1. THE *BAYᶜA* AS A RITUAL OF CONVERSION AND ALLEGIANCE

Three episodes in the traditional account of the early history of the *umma* furnish most of the examples of the acknowledgement of the authority of a Muslim leader by individuals and groups not previously part of his community.[1] First (i), in 8/629–30, Mecca was incorporated into the *umma* in a near-bloodless 'conquest' (*fatḥ*, lit. 'opening'). Second (ii), the following year (9/630–1) is remembered as the 'year of delegations' (*ᶜām al-wufūd*), when tribes from the Ḥijāz and elsewhere sent representatives to Muḥammad and made agreements with him (some delegations came in 10 and 11/631–2, and others had come earlier, but 9/630–1 was remembered as the pivotal moment). Third (iii), after the Prophet's death in 11/632, the tribes sought to negotiate new agreements. This last instance suggests that the *bayᶜa* was a pledge of personal loyalty (as the evidence of the Qurʾān also implies), which ended with the death of one of the parties to it. As a result of the termination of the pacts on the Prophet's death, his successor in leading the *umma*, Abū Bakr b. Abī Quḥāfa, fought the 'wars of apostasy' (*ḥurūb al-ridda*) to restore the allegiance of tribes that no longer acknowledged Medina's political authority, or recognised it only nominally. At the same time, Abū Bakr extended his authority over groups that had never recognised Muḥammad. Most of Arabia was brought under his authority in 11 and 12/632–4. In what follows, each of these three episodes (8/630, 9/630–1 and 11–12/632–4) is taken in turn.

1.i. The surrender and conversion of the Meccans in 8/630

The later tradition is unanimous that the people of Mecca were incorporated into the Muslim polity in 8/630, after their leaders had agreed to recognise

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Muḥammad's authority and thus convert to Islam. A negotiated settlement of this kind must have been reached with the Meccan tribe of Quraysh. That this entailed a religio-political pact is logical, conforms to what is known of existing Arabian precedent and is the subject of many later traditions.

Most of the sources describe a pact made between the Prophet and Abū Sufyān and other Meccan leaders prior to Muḥammad's entry into Mecca, which is usually described as a 'treaty' or 'safe-conduct' (*amān*);[2] some also describe the pledge of allegiance (*bayᶜa*) given by the Meccans to Muḥammad once he had entered the town.[3] (One exception is Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ's account in his *Taʾrīkh*, which is so brief as to leave both pacts unmentioned.[4]) Because of the importance of the Prophetic example, or *sunna*, in later Islamic legal thought, one cause of the variations in this material is the tendency of later Muslims to find legal models in the memory of the Prophet's career. In this instance, the conquest of towns by force or treaty (*ᶜanwatan* or *ṣulḥan*), the use of safe-conducts (*amān*s) and the taking of pledges of allegiance (*bayᶜa*s) were all practices that might be explained with reference to the memory of Prophet Muḥammad's conduct at Mecca.

Two further causes of variation are the tendency to elaborate existing knowledge over time and the presence of versions of history favourable to particular later religio-political positions. The tendency to elaboration probably led to contradictory material about where in or near Mecca any pledge might have taken place; the need to promote (or denigrate) particular figures probably contributed to the prominent roles of Abū Sufyān and al-ᶜAbbās (the progenitors of the Umayyads and the Abbasids) respectively in the traditions about the negotiation of Mecca's surrender, as well as to debates about who had the honour of carrying the Prophet's banner into Mecca.

Some of the consequences of the covenant are more certain because they can be seen in subsequent events. One result was the incorporation of the Meccan sanctuary into Muslim ritual. A treaty in 6/628 is said to have given the Muslims access to the shrine and,[5] after 8/630, the Meccan *ḥajj* is said to have become an annual rite (although its nature and status may have changed and been contested for some time).[6] Related to this retention of the shrine's role was the Meccan elite's securing of their own position; many of the Meccan nobility were said to have been rewarded with appointments and gifts by Muḥammad.[7] Such was the Meccans' dominant position in the polity that all future leaders of the Muslim empire (though not all contenders for leadership) were Meccans or their descendants.

1.ii. The year of delegations (ᶜām al-wufūd).

The fall of Mecca was a definitive sign of Muslim hegemony in the Ḥijāz. Muḥammad's cause was helped further by the simultaneous collapse of Sasanian

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and Ḥimyarite power, which left his Ḥijāzī federation dominant in the Peninsula.[8] The year 9/630–1 was remembered as the 'year of delegations' (*ʿām al-wufūd*), in which representatives of most of the tribes of the Ḥijāz came to make covenants with the Prophet, as did some groups from more distant regions;[9] security was to be sought in joining or allying with the most powerful religio-political entity in the region. The sending of such 'delegations' (*wufūd*, sing. *wafd*) or 'delegates' (*wufūd*, *awfād*, sing. *wāfid*) to negotiate with, or pay homage to, a superior power was customary among the Arabian tribes (as throughout the Near East).[10]

The reports of the delegations may have been modified or invented to bolster the 'Islamic' prestige of a tribe (through a claim to early 'conversion'), enhance claims to fiscal or land rights, develop or defend legal norms,[11] conform to later ideas about tribal structures (for example, the chiefs of tribal sub-sections may be presented as delegates for their whole tribe) or elaborate upon the image of Muḥammad as a prophet.[12] Nonetheless, it is very likely that some of the material reflects early seventh-century practice. As we have seen, pledges of allegiance taken by Muḥammmad for conversion and allegiance were in many respects a continuation of existing Arabian custom; the pledge before a deity, recorded in a document, is a cultural form found in pre-Islamic Arabia and throughout the Near East, and was commonly used in the Roman empire in late antiquity for the incorporation of 'convert' federate troops.[13] The exchange of gifts was another near-universal feature of such rituals. Where military authority was delegated, the conferring of a banner on a subordinate also often seems to have been customary; this, too, had pre-Islamic precedents.

Negotiations with Muḥammad are often said to have led to the composition of a written agreement (*kitāb*) – a dispositive document recording privileges guaranteed and obligations stipulated – of which the tradition preserves a number of examples.[14] Where more than one version of such a treaty survives, the variants show that any original that may have existed has not been transmitted accurately. However, treaty documents tend to be kept by the parties to them and the form and content of the extant copies of the pacts with the *wufūd* suggest that some may reflect aspects of genuine written agreements: all are only a few lines long and all are personal agreements between the Prophet, on the one hand, and individual delegates, on the other; God is invoked as a guarantor by an opening *basmala* formula, the invocation of His covenant or His invocation as a witness (or by a combination of these devices). In these respects, and in structure and vocabulary, they closely resemble agreements like that made by ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib in sixth-century Mecca and they also anticipate later agreements made between the conquering armies beyond Arabia in the 630s and 640s.[15]

In most of the treaty documents, rights over land and property are guaranteed; in some cases this is explicitly in return for *islām* – 'submission' or 'conversion';

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obligations are often listed, such as the duties to 'perform prayer' (*iqāmat al-ṣalāt*), 'give charity' (*ītāʾ al-zakāt*), 'hear and obey' (*al-samᶜ waʾl-ṭāᶜa*) and 'help in war' (*al-nuṣra*), all of which echo the terse terminology of the Qurʾān. Sometimes tax or tribute obligations are also set out, and some texts refer to the appointment of one of the delegates as the Prophet's representative over the relevant tribe.

Beyond the writing of a dispositive document, other elements of the customs of delegation and allegiance also recur in the accounts of the *wufūd*. Gift-exchange, the giving of blessings by the Prophet and his tying of banners for appointees to military commands are three frequently mentioned rituals. All were symbolic representations of the reciprocal but asymmetric relationship between Muḥammad, the senior party in the covenant, and the tribal delegates. All have precedents in pre-Islamic material (and thus most likely have some basis in fact), but all have also clearly been subject to the reshapings of subsequent historical memory.

Gift-exchange is an ancient and universal element of treaty-making and vassalage, and it seems very likely that some of the reports of the giving of gifts to Muḥammad by the tribes reflect early seventh-century custom.[16] However, the tradition often invokes the kerygmatic past to answer much later questions: the problem of whether it was proper to receive gifts from pagans is one theme of the stories of gifts received by the Prophet.[17] Many accounts also suggest the reshaping of accounts of Muḥammad's life according to biblical and other Near Eastern patterns. For example, an account about the gift of a she-camel to Muḥammad recalls pre-Islamic Arabian customs (and ancient Semitic custom); it may reflect an actual event, or be a later reworking of the account of the Prophet's life, perhaps in response to biblical prophetic patterns.[18]

Muḥammad also gave gifts to the envoys; again, this echoes ancient Near Eastern custom, in which royal largesse indebts its recipient to the king.[19] The 'diplomatic gifts' (*jawāʾiz*, sing. *jawza*, *jāʾiza*) given by the Prophet to the tribes are often described as silver or gold – between 5 and 12½ *uqiyya*s (a few hundred grams) – or, on at least one occasion, a cloak.[20] In Arabic, the term *jāʾiza* can refer both to the three days' hospitality given to guests and also to diplomatic gifts (as it is used here).[21] In both cases, the word signifies the generosity of the greater man to the weaker or lesser one, as well as the weaker man's debt to his patron. Muḥammad also calls upon God to bring rain to the lands of the delegates;[22] elsewhere he 'strokes' or 'anoints' (*masaḥa*) the faces of the delegates themselves, an act that conveyed his 'blessing' (*baraka*) to them.[23] That this material was recast by later traditionists seems almost certain, either to fill out the image of the Prophet's sacral authority,[24] or to enhance tribal claims to association with Prophetic charisma, but it may well also reflect actual Arabian practices.

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Arabian custom is also probably reflected in the many references to banners, which appear to be a very early strand of the Arabic–Islamic historical tradition. Possession of a banner tied by the Prophet was a mark of authority and honour: the names of those given banners by the Prophet before raids were remembered; which banners subsequently took part in important battles was also remembered. When the Prophet delegated military command to a tribal envoy, he is often said to have 'tied a banner for him over his people' (*ʿaqada lahu liwāʾan ʿalā qawmihi*). This is a standard phrase throughout the tradition for appointing to military command, but one that has its roots in the symbolic role of banners in Arabian culture. For example, the pre-Islamic Quraysh are also said to have had assigned war banners to their followers at Mecca, and the banner appears in a number of pre-Islamic verses:[25]

> And their fires burned, sparking; and in every assembly-place the banner was raised for them (*wa-yurfaʿ lakum fī-kull majmaʿat liwāʾ*).[26]

> Squadrons of cavalry winning easily, above each squadron a banner like the shade of a fluttering bird (*katāʾib tuzjā fawqa kull katība liwāʾ ka-ẓill al-ṭāʾir al-mutaqallib*).[27]

The banner was the pre-eminent symbol of a 'co-liable-group' in assembly for war, and in battle itself, and it retained the same significance in early Islam.

1.iii. Abū Bakr's agreements with Arabians

After Abū Bakr's recognition as the Prophet's successor at Medina in 11/632, the Ḥijāzī townsmen and nomads also quickly acknowledged him; the continued success of the *umma* was to their advantage. Groups elsewhere sought to renegotiate their relationship with Medina. The tradition preserves accounts of 'delegations' (*wufūd*) coming to him from sections of tribes of Asad, Ghaṭafān and Ṭayyiʾ, who occupied the northern part of the central Arabian region of the Najd, to the north-east. The failure of negotiations turned on their refusal to pay 'alms' (*zakāt*), and their pledges of allegiance were secured only after the battle of al-Buzākha, fought towards the end of 11/633. The Muslims' victory persuaded many of other tribes in Najd, such as Tamīm, Sulaym, Hawāzīn and ʿĀmir, to pledge their allegiance.[28] In southern Najd, a written peace-treaty (*amān*) was made with the Banū Ḥanīfa only after their bloody defeat at al-ʿAqrabāʾ.[29] Tribute and hostages were given, and, with the truce agreed, the Banū Ḥanīfa 'were made to gather to Khālid for the pledge of allegiance and the declaration of quittance from previous obligations' (*wa-ḥushirat Banū Ḥanīfa ilā al-bayʿa*

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wa'l-barāʾa mimmā kānū ʿalayhi ilā Khālid). The 'quittance' is an interesting detail in the light of the resistance having been led by a 'false prophet', Maslama, who seems to have made very similar claims to those of Muḥammad.

In the south and east of the Peninsula, the Prophet's authority seems to have been more nominal. In Baḥrayn and ʿUmān, Muḥammad had backed former allies of the Sasanians by recognising them as his representatives. After the Prophet's death, Abū Bakr sent forces to support tribes still loyal to Medina in both regions. Those sent to ʿUmān went on to Ẓufār and Ḥaḍramawt, where they cooperated with other Muslim groups in defeating Kinda, who, like Ṭayyiʾ, Tamīm and Ḥanīfa, may have produced rival prophets in the wake of Muḥammad.[30] In the south-west, conflict between rival factions at Ṣanʿa for control of the kingdom of Ḥimyar had allowed Muḥammad to claim authority over many of the tribes south of the Ḥijāz that had formerly been loyal to the South Arabian kingdom. After his death, Christian delegates from Najrān are said to have come 'to renew their covenant' (*yujaddidū ʿahdan*) with Abū Bakr, which guaranteed 'protection' (*dhimma* and *jiwār*) for them – an early example of a covenant for *muʿāhadūn* ('covenant-makers', 'non-Muslim monotheists') as opposed to *muslimūn* ('submitters', 'Muslims').[31] The victors in the Ḥimyarite civil war, Qays b. Makshūḥ and ʿAmr b. Maʿdīkarib, eventually recognised Abū Bakr's authority in 12/633–4.[32]

These accounts suggest a continuation of the Prophetic insistence on the authority of the monotheist God expressed through existing Arabian custom, but in the context of an increasing capacity to exert influence through military force. In surrendering to Abū Bakr, the tribes are said to have declared that they 'submitted to (God's) authority over our property and ourselves' (*wa-nusallimu li-ḥukmihi fī-amwālinā wa-anfusinā*).[33] Abū Bakr's delegates could receive pledges on his behalf, as Khālid did from the Banū Ḥanīfa after al-ʿAqrabāʾ;[34] so could his subordinates' subordinates.[35] Reports of pledges taken to sub-commanders are sometimes said to have been sent back to Abū Bakr in Medina. Such messages recall the giving of pledges by nomad Arabs 'by messenger' (*bbr*[*d*]) mentioned on Abraha's stele at Maʾrib.[36] The use of delegations by the tribes and their negotiations with Abū Bakr or his representatives are both prominent in many of the accounts. Written agreements were concluded for truces and pledges of allegiance.[37] Banners are frequently mentioned as the emblems of delegated military authority.[38] The taking of prisoners as hostages recalls Near Eastern practice in general, and pre-Islamic Arabian custom at al-Ḥīra and Ṣanʿa.[39]

2. THE *BAYʿA* AS AN AFFIRMATION OF LOYALTY

Whereas the pledges at Mecca in 630, and those taken from the delegations and the defeated tribes in 632–4, were rituals for conversion and allegiance,

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recognising new religio-political authority, the term *bayᶜa* is also used to describe pledges taken as an affirmation, or consolidation, of existing alliance or allegiance, prior to hostile confrontations. As we have seen, the internal evidence of the Qurʾān also shows that a pledge affirming loyalty to the Prophet in war is the likely subject of both *sūrat al-Fatḥ* and *sūrat Barāʾa*, and some of the highly contradictory later traditions about these verses support this association.[40] Only 'the pledge of the women' (Q 60.12) is unequivocally taken to be a pledge of type '1', given by new adherents to the cause.

As discussed in Chapter 1, most of the references to loyalty and unity found in the pre-Islamic poetry refer to unity in armed conflict, and the same ideas recur in the later tradition about the first years of Islam.[41] There are also numerous references to affirmatory pledges taken on the eve of battle. All have the features of the literary *topoi* that are prevalent in the historical tradition – that is, they have the character of transferable motifs that may have been used to fill gaps in the later historical memory. Nonetheless, although the circumstances of any single instance of a *topos* can be challenged, they often do in fact reflect aspects of early seventh-century practice: analyses of traditions about the conquests have revealed that, although the *topoi* about warfare are sometimes spurious and used to fill out a narrative, they are sometimes corroborated by independent evidence.[42]

The covenants made by Kinda when they were besieged by the Muslims in 632–3 have already been mentioned.[43] Many of the accounts collected by Sayf b. ᶜUmar (d. late eighth-century) about the battles with Rome and Iran include similar pledges. In an account of the battle of al-Qādisiyya in 635, speeches were made before battle, reminding the Muslims that 'before them lay either Paradise or spoils' (*fa-inna al-janna aw al-ghanīma amāmakum*).[44] Afterwards:

> The people made mutual agreements and covenants (*tawāthaqa al-nās wa-taᶜāhadū*) and urged each to do what he must, and the Persian troops did the same among themselves.[45]

Just before battle was joined, the commander is said to have ordered *sūrat al-Jihād* to be read out.[46] No such title survives in the extant Qurʾān, which may be evidence for the historicity of a report that refers to the period before the canonical text was fixed.[47] At the encounter with the Roman army at al-Yarmūk in 636, one of the Muslim commanders, the Meccan ᶜIkrima b. Abī Jahl, is said to have taken a pledge 'to the death' (*ᶜalā al-mawt*) from 400 volunteers among his troops.[48] At al-Jalūla, in 637 or 638, the Persians 'made compacts and covenants by fires that they would not flee' (*wa-tawāthaqū wa-taᶜāhadū bi'l-nīrān an lā yafirrū*).[49] In an account of the civil-war battle of Ṣiffīn in 657, transmitted by Abū Mikhnāf (d. 774), many of the Syrians took a pledge of allegiance unto

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death to Muᶜāwiya (*bāyaᶜa . . . ᶜalā al-mawt*).[50] During the battle, one of ᶜAlī's senior commanders is said to have agreed to a similar oath with soldiers looking for support:

> (The tribesmen of Hamdān) retreated, saying: 'Would that we had an equal number from among the Arabs who would swear an alliance with us to fight to the death (*layta la-nā ᶜiddatanā min al-ᶜarab yuḥālifūnanā ᶜalā al-mawt*). Then we and they together would advance and not retreat until we were killed or achieved the victory.' They passed by al-Ashtar while they were saying this, and he addressed them: 'Come to me. I will swear an alliance with you and make a covenant (*ilayyā uḥālifukum wa-uᶜāqidukum*) never to retreat until we have gained the victory or have perished.' So they came to him and stood with him in battle (*fa-atūhu fa-waqafū maᶜahu*).[51]

In the legal literature of the ninth century and after, the question of such affirmatory pledges 'not to flee', or 'unto death', is always explained with reference to the story of the *bayᶜat al-Riḍwān* taken at al-Ḥudaybiya before a confrontation with the Meccans in 628. This pledge is said to have been made for very similar terms and at al-Ḥudaybiya is usually linked to verse 18 of *sūrat al-Fatḥ*.[52] The pledges are also always described as *bayᶜa*s: for the epistemic community of the Muslim *ᶜulamāᵓ* the memory of the Prophet's conduct had become normative.[53] However, the historical traditions about similar pacts and pledges, taken in the 630s–650s and variously *bayᶜāt*, *ᶜuqūd*, *ᶜuhūd* and *aḥlāf*, suggest that the practice of Muḥammad and the early Muslims was derived from Arabian custom, which had analogues throughout the late antique Near East.

3. THE *BAYᶜA* AS ACCESSION RITUAL

Whereas the Qurᵓān attests to the use of the verb *bāyaᶜa* in the senses of (1) an oath of allegiance to the leader of the *umma* taken from those seeking to join it and (2) an oath of loyalty in war taken from existing members of the polity, it makes no mention of the third sense in which it is used in the sources for the first decades of Islam: a pledge taken to recognise a new leader of the *umma*. (Indeed, as has often been observed, the Qurᵓān makes no unambiguous mention of arrangements for the succession to Muḥammad.) However, once the idea of leadership of the polity by one man had been accepted, this third use of the term *bāyaᶜa* was a logical consequence of the first: because a pledge of allegiance expressed obligations owed to an individual, that individual's death ended the covenant and his successor required a new pledge. When Muḥammad died, delegations came seeking to negotiate a new agreement with Abū Bakr. The same came to be true

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for all members of the *umma*: new leaders demanded a public commitment to recognition of their authority.

On the death of Muḥammad, it was still possible for most of the Muslim elite to gather in one place in Medina. The tumultuous meeting that resulted in the recognition of Abū Bakr is said to have taken place there, at the 'shelter' (*saqīfa*) of the Banū Sāᶜida. The outlines of the customs and ideas that informed the decision can be discerned in the numerous traditions about it. The consultation (*mashwara*) that is said to have taken place among the senior Muslims reflected the consultative nature of leadership in pre-Islamic tribal groups, in which a *sayyid* or *amīr* was recognised on the basis of a consensus among the leading men of the tribe. That *amīr* is the first widely used title of the caliphs, and *sayyid* is also sometimes used to refer to them, suggests that their authority could be understood in traditional, tribal terms.[54] However, the candidates' claims seem to have been founded not just on perceptions of pre-Islamic nobility, or *sharaf*, but also on their status as pious, founding members of the monotheist community and on their reputation as close associates of the Prophet. Blood relationships to Muḥammad and relations through marriage also appear to have carried weight from the outset. The particular choice of Abū Bakr is said to have turned on the presence of an organised faction who supported him strongly at the meeting.[55] On his death, two years later, in 634, there seems to have been no public dissent when ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb took up the leadership. The tradition remembered this as a succession by Abū Bakr's nomination, after a consultation with a few of the leading Muslims. It may have been; it is likely that the word of the incumbent leader counted for something;[56] the right of a ruler to appoint his heir was a well-established principle in the Near East, and an unusual feature of the traditions about ᶜUmar is that no mention is made of a *bayᶜa* to him.[57]

By 644, when ᶜUmar was assassinated by a Persian captive, the conquests had scattered the Muslims across Arabia, Egypt, Syria and Iraq. However, the second leader of the Muslims had responded to the *umma*'s new imperial circumstances. Alongside his efforts to organise settlement, taxation and the distribution of wealth, ᶜUmar is also said to have attempted to formalise the succession. Customary methods of face-to-face consultation among everyone who mattered were no longer feasible. ᶜUmar's response was to set up a conclave of the six candidates who had sufficient support to make them potential leaders so that they could choose the new ruler from among themselves; in doing this, ᶜUmar may have drawn upon existing Arabian custom.[58]

The *shūrā*'s choice, ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAffān, is not remembered as initially controversial; his accession has left a relatively small imprint in the tradition (unlike the conclave itself, which generated a vast corpus of material because of its continued importance in political theory and later religio-political dispute). In

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traditions related by Sayf b. ʿUmar (d. late eighth-century) it takes the form of *awāʾil* literature, or the account of 'firsts':

> ʿUthmān became caliph (*ustukhlafa*) on 3 al-Muḥarram of the year 24 (9 November 644). He then went out and led the people in prayer. He increased (their stipends) and despatched envoys (to the provinces) and he established that as a custom.[59]

In another, very similar, account, the members of the *shūrā* are described as having 'agreed upon' (*ijtamaʿa ʿalā*) ʿUthmān before he went out to lead the prayer, dispatch envoys and give out money.[60]

ʿUthmān was the first caliph to take power after the conquest of Roman Egypt and Oriens and Sasanian Iraq, and so he probably was indeed the first to send envoys to the garrisons on his accession (though Abū Bakr and ʿUmar would have had to announce their claims within Arabia, and fast communication by riders was a existing feature of Arabian culture).[61] The connection between leading the prayer and leadership in general is clear here as throughout the tradition: the mosque was the location for public political life. The increase in stipends may be a *topos*, but it is a plausible one. Other versions give 'treated them generously' and note that he 'gave an extra 100 (dirhams)' to 'the people'. The gesture recalls the Prophet's *jawāʾiz* to the delegations and the conduct of all ancient and late antique rulers seeking to consolidate their authority.

However, it is contested authority that makes pledges of allegiance really memorable, and so the second half of ʿUthmān's reign (*c*. 650–6), when his authority was challenged, and the civil war that followed his murder (656–61) both generated large numbers of traditions.

In 655–6, ʿUthmān received delegations from Egypt and Iraq who brought grievances about his leadership. One strand of the tradition recounts that the delegations demanded a covenant (*mīthāq*) from him, and that written conditions (*sharṭan* – or perhaps, *sittan*, 'six points') were imposed on (*akhadha ʿalā*) ʿUthmān. In return, the delegates agreed 'not to shatter a staff, nor withdraw from unity, so long as he upheld their conditions for them' (*allā yashuqqū ʿaṣan wa-lā yufāriqū jamāʿatan mā aqāma lahum sharṭahum*).[62] Other accounts preserve versions of the document (*kitāb*), each of which runs to a few lines.[63] Variants indicate that any original text has been lost. But the brevity of all the versions and consistencies in vocabulary and content suggest that there may have been an original and that the sources of resentment were those to which they refer: payment of stipends and imposition of governors on the garrisons. It seems likely that the method of attempting to resolve the grievances was indeed via delegation, negotiation and the composition of a written covenant.[64]

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In spite of these efforts at reconciliation, ʿUthmān was unable to recover his authority, and rivals began to manœuvre for position in expectation of his being deposed or assassinated. By the end of the year he was under house arrest at Medina, besieged by provincials still dissatisfied with his rule. In what would be the last days of his life, he is said to have written letters justifiying his claim to authority, which he sent to the Muslims assembled at the *ḥajj* and to the Syrians. The text sent to the *ḥajj* is preserved only by al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), who ascribes it, on the authority of al-Wāqidī (d. 823) and a chain of his authorities, to ʿIkrima (d. 723), a client (*mawlā*) of the Prophet's nephew, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās, who is said to have led the *ḥajj* on ʿUthmān's behalf and read out the letter there.[65] The letter to the Syrians is found in Ibn Asākir's (d. 1176) *Taʾrīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, on the authority of one Ismāʿīl b. ʿUbayd Allāh al-Makhzūmī.[66] It is similar in content, although the textual variations between the two versions suggest significant deformation of the material in its transmission to al-Ṭabarī and Ibn ʿAsākir. Given the very late dates of the extant versions of the letters and their length and style, it is not possible to rely on them as evidence of any originals. Furthermore, al-Ṭabarī's version begins with an assembly of quranic quotations about loyalty to God's covenant, which is very unusual in a seventh-century text and reminiscent of much later documents.[67] It is certainly possible that the letters may reflect some of the *substance* of ʿUthmān's position: they emphasise the obligation to 'fulfil (God's) covenant' (*awfū bi'l-ʿahd*) through obedience and unity (*al-samʿ wa'l-ṭāʿa wa'l-jamāʿa*);[68] their tone is conciliatory, acknowledging the provincial delegates' criticisms and seeking to justify ʿUthmān's continued authority over the *umma*.[69]

Those besieging ʿUthmān killed him on 18 Dhū al-Ḥijja 35 (17 June 656).[70] With his death, leadership by the consent, or at least tolerance, of peers (that is, the senior Muhājirūn, who had accompanied Muḥammad to Medina in 622) and their supporters (the Anṣār of Medina, the Meccan nobility and the tribal leaders in the garrisons) ended, and the components of the Muslim federation split into open factional rivalry. ʿUthmān's closest supporters from the Banū Umayya, his sub-tribe of Quraysh, were no longer safe in Medina and fled to Mecca and Syria.[71] At around the same time, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, received the pledge of allegiance (although how indecorously soon after ʿUthmān's death the pledge was given was the subject of controversy).[72] The emergence of rival candidates for the caliphate gave the public expression of allegiance a heightened importance: by giving or withholding the *bayʿa*, sides were taken within the Ḥijāzī elite.

The tradition is consistent on the factions and their leaders, but exactly what part they played immediately became the stuff of partisan dispute. The factions at Medina were six: the Muhājirūn, the Anṣār, the Egyptians, the Kufans, the

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Umayyads and the '[c]Uthmāniyya' (the latter two, [c]Uthmān's sub-tribe within Quraysh, and those who had benefited most from his rule overlap somewhat with one another as well as with the Muhājirūn). In every version of events, [c]Alī is represented as the more-or-less unwilling focus for the aspirations of the Egyptian and Kufan factions, who had vociferously criticised [c]Uthmān and from among whom his killers had come, as well as for those of the Anṣār, who resented their marginalisation by Mecca in general and by [c]Uthmān in particular; Mālik b. al-Ḥārith al-Nakhā[c]ī ('Mālik al-Ashtar'), who had been vociferous in opposing [c]Uthmān, is counted among his killers and went on to be an important figure in [c]Alī's government. The leading Meccan Muhājirūn, Ṭalḥa b. [c]Ubayd Allāh and al-Zubayr b. [c]Awwām, quickly became the focus of Meccan ambitions, and were backed by the Prophet's widow, [c]Ā[ɔ]isha b. Abī Bakr, in claiming the caliphate.[73] In these accounts, whether or not particular figures pledged allegiance to [c]Alī is significant, as is the question of the extent of [c]Alī's support and the degree to which his rivals had been coerced into pledging allegiance to him. As we would expect, those who refused allegiance to [c]Alī included figures who enjoyed significant power under [c]Uthmān – the '[c]Uthmāniyya'.

All those who sought power appear to have recognised that the Ḥijāz lacked the military and economic resources required for near-inevitable war and immediately sought out supporters who had access to these resources. The Umayyad Mu[c]āwiya b. Abī Sufyān held Syria, and Egypt was in turmoil, which left the garrisons of Iraq: [c]Ā[ɔ]isha, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr had support in Basra, [c]Alī in Kufa. Pledges of allegiance were taken in both places, and both parties also sent messages to the other provinces, seeking support from there. [c]Alī is said to have recognised loyalists in their posts as governors, and sought to replace others.[74] After [c]Alī had demanded pledges from the provinces, Mu[c]āwiya, the eventual victor in the ensuing civil war, joined those who refused. His secure position in Syria, parts of which he had governed for two decades, meant that he could await the outcome of events without taking sides.

Later ideas about loyalty and legitimacy were expressed through the memory of the early community's practice, and so the terms of these agreements are unlikely to have been transmitted unchanged; [c]Alī's importance to later religio-political positions is particularly apparent.[75] The frequent mention of both 'the book of God and the *sunna* of His Prophet' echoes the pledges taken by later rebels against Umayyad authority who claimed to restore Alid or Hāshimite authority. However, both this phrase and 'God's covenant and compact' *may* reflect early terminology: if it is assumed that 'of His Prophet' is a later interpolation, then the phrases echo demonstrably reliable copies of early documents, including the 'Ṣiffīn arbitration agreement' (a sort of preliminary treaty that set the terms for negotiations between [c]Alī and Mu[c]āwiya about the caliphate). That

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the pledge was concluded by a hand gesture is also in little doubt – all the evidence for pre-Islamic pacts indicates that this is how such pacts were contracted and the tradition is consistent on this point for early Islam.[76] The importance of the mosque as a gathering-place is also clear, as is the close link between leadership of the prayers and political and military authority. Payments to 'the people' are referred to on a number of occasions.[77]

The banner remains an important symbol of delegated military authority in many accounts of the civil war. Although this material has been reworked, notably by the Abbasids, for whom Prophetic and Alid precedents for their black banners were important,[78] but also already in the Umayyad period,[79] 'tying banners' as an expression denoting the delegation of military command probably had pre-Islamic origins.[80] One unusual account describes ᶜAlī 'tying a banner' for al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra:

> Abū Ṣufra set off with al-Muhallab, who was at that time aged twenty-seven, and took him in to ᶜAlī. He anointed (*masaḥa*) him from his head to his feet and from his lock of hair to his heels, tied the banner for him, and said, 'O God, endow him with courage, munificence and understanding.' [81]

The report seems to be unique to al-Awtabī (d. early twelfth century). If it derives from the seventh century, it is an unusual insight into early Islamic ritual.[82] However, it looks like Muhallabid clan mythology, which links the patriarch of the important Azdī dynasty, al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra, with the patriarch of the Alids, ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, perhaps as part of a cluster of traditions emphasising the parallels between the martyrdom of their respective sons, and their Iraqi followings, on the orders of the Syrian Umayyad caliphs. (Al-Muhallab's son, Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, was killed at al-ᶜAqr in 720 – an event compared with the killing of ᶜAlī's son, al-Ḥusayn, at Karbalāʾ in 680.[83]) Nonetheless, the symbolism is quite clear. For late antique monotheists, as for the ancient Israelites, anointing symbolised the bestowal of God's authority by His representatives.[84] The ritual alludes to the sacerdotal dimensions of the *khilāfat Allāh* or 'the vice-regency of God'; in combination with the 'tying of the banner', it denotes the privileged position of al-Muhallab with ᶜAlī. Because it is unusual, it may reflect early practice, but most likely it can be taken as evidence only of the mid-eighth-century memory of seventh-century ritual, rather than of the seventh-century ritual itself.

CONCLUSIONS

ᶜAlī's bestowal of his blessing and banner on al-Muhallab is quite typical of the tradition's account of the mid-seventh century: echoes of Arabian practice may

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be present, but the surviving evidence often says more about early eighth-century concerns than seventh-century events. This lack of primary evidence means that many questions about the period in which the Muslims conquered Arabia and defeated the two great powers of late antiquity are likely to remain open – the evidence required to answer them does not survive. Nonetheless, some important conclusions can be made about pledges of allegiance in this period, and a number of other probabilities may be posited as making the best sense of the evidence.

That pledges of allegiance were central to the expression of political obligation in early Islam is certain. In this respect the early Islamic polity conformed to the pattern of other Near Eastern societies; the survival of memories of early pledges in later tradition also attests to their importance. That many of the elements of the rituals associated with the pledge in later tradition resemble pre-Islamic practice suggests, as would be expected, that their forms were derived from Arabian custom. In both pre-Islamic Arabic and in Epigraphic South Arabian, 'willing obedience', most usually in war, was denoted by the consonantal roots *sīn*, *mīm*, *ᶜayn* and *ṭāᵓ*, *wāw*, *ᶜayn*,[85] whence *al-samᶜ wa'l-ṭāᶜa*, or 'hearing and obeying' – a pairing that occurs in both the Qurᵓān and in the earliest, eighth-century traditions about the *bayᶜa*s to the Prophet and the caliphs. These later traditions are not primary evidence of what was actually said at the pledges taken to Muḥammad and his early seventh-century successors. Nonetheless, it is likely that they do reflect at least the essence of the agreements – a pledge for 'willing obedience' in war, rewarded with spiritual and material gain. Given the presence of the same formulas in the Qurᵓān and their similarities with pre-Islamic Arabian texts, it is very likely that they echo language already in use in the early seventh century.

That the earliest title of the Muslims' leader is said to have been simply 'emir' ('commander', or 'leader', Ar. *amīr*), soon expanded to 'commander of the believers' (*amīr al-muᵓminīn*), also suggests some continuity with such pre-Islamic concepts of leadership for war, as does the occasional appearance of the term *sayyid*.[86] Recognition by one's peers was the basis of authority: Abū Bakr b. Abī Quḥāfa was chosen at a meeting of senior Muslims, convened on the Prophet's death; his nominated successor, ᶜUmar, was widely recognised as his natural heir; ᶜUthmān was chosen by a more formal assembly of those with the requisite recognition to lead the polity. Sustained success, and the capacity to reward loyalty, was still the prerequisite for continued recognition: Abū Bakr's and ᶜUmar's wars of expansion maintained the unity of the *umma*; the expansion of the empire, and the resentment of those who lost out under ᶜUthmān's leadership, 'fractured the staff of unity'.

However, what differentiated the early Muslim polity from many of its precursors was its fusion of pre-Islamic tribal custom with monotheist ideas and

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practice. 'Hearing and obeying' – *al-samᶜ wa'l-ṭāᶜa* – recalled both pre-Islamic political language and the language of the Hebrew Bible, where the Israelites 'hear and obey' God's covenant (although *ṭāᶜa* is a word unique to Arabic and Epigraphic South Arabian).[87] The connection between leading the prayer and leading the Muslims in politics and war is evident in many of the traditions and finds a physical expression in the importance of the mosque as the location of religio-political assembly. The emir was 'the Servant of God . . . the Commander of the Believers' (*ᶜabd Allāh . . . amīr al-muᵓminīn*) and the 'caliph' (*khalīfa*), that is the 'successor' (to Muḥammad's authority), but also 'deputy' (of God on earth).[88] When the Muslims pledged allegiance to him, they did so under 'God's covenant', as they had done in pledging allegiance to the Prophet. We do not need the remarkable collection of quranic quotations attributed to ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAffān to prove this: the idea recurs in almost all the copies of early dispositive documents preserved in the tradition.

The pledges were made under an ideal, divine covenant, which could transcend tribal custom and unite the polity as an *umma* – a religious polity – not merely as a tribal federation. However, there was also a reciprocity present in the concept of the pledge of allegiance as an exchange of obligations. This reflects both Arabian expectations of reciprocity in alliance and allegiance and also tensions within the monotheist religious tradition: a leader could be held to have failed to live up to his side of the 'bargain' and therefore to have broken God's covenant. This is how opponents of ᶜUthmān appear to have expressed their grievances. At the same time, there was also the potential for a caliph to claim unquestioning obedience on the basis of a pact guaranteed by God and made with His representative, which sat uneasily with more egalitarian and reciprocal conceptions of authority.[89]

Because of the paucity of our sources, only the outlines of the earliest contention over these matters can now be perceived. However, with the emergence of the Islamic empire into the half-light of the late seventh century, some aspects of how the ideology and political culture brought out of Arabia by the conquerors of the Near East began to be reinterpreted in the new context of Mesopotamian kingship and empire become apparent.

NOTES

1. Some of the early agreements with the Medinans in *c*. 622 are sometimes called *bayᶜa*s too; however, they tend to have the character of *ḥilf* agreements: see Mélamède, 'The meetings at al-Aḳaba'; on the women's pledges to Muḥammad when he entered Medina, see IS, viii, 5ff.
2. e.g. Waq., ii, 780ff.; IH, 809ff.; IS, ii, 134ff.
3. Ṭab., i, 1630ff. (For 'the pledge of the women', see Waq., ii, 850f.; IS, viii, 5ff.)

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4. Khal., 87.
5. Watt, *Medina*, 46ff.
6. Hawting, 'Origins of the Muslim sanctuary'; Hawting, 'The Ḥajj in the second civil war'.
7. Watt, *Medina*, 73–4; Donner, *Conquests*, 65–7. Cf. the terms for Thaqīf and Hawāzīn, at al-Ṭāʾif: Watt, *Medina*, 100–1, 103–4.
8. Shoufani, *Al-Riddah*, 87; Donner, *Conquests*, 62ff.
9. e.g. IH, 933.
10. See above, p. 33.
11. Shoufani, *Al-Riddah*, 88.
12. On the literary representation of Muḥammad, see Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*.
13. See above, p. 52.
14. e.g. IS, i, 302, 303, 307, 327, 335, 341, 344; Hamidullah, *Majmūᶜa al-wathāʾiq*, 209ff.; Donner, *Conquests*, 72–3.
15. See above, pp. 27–8, and Hill, *Termination of Hostilities*; but cf. Robinson, *Empire*, 1ff.
16. For the ancient Arabians' exemption from tax but obligation to bring gifts to the Achaemenid kings, see Ephᶜal, 'Syria–Palestine', 162.
17. al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ii, 141–2., bk 51.28.
18. IS, i, 293. See above, p. 22, and Genesis 21: 25–31.
19. See above, pp. 33–4.
20. Donner, *Conquests*, 65 and n. 48.
21. Lane, s.v.; *Lisān*, s.v.
22. IS, i, 297–8.
23. IS, i, 299, 310, 315. Cf. Pedersen, *Eid*, 62; Nelson, 'Symbols in context', 275; *ABD*, s.v. 'Sacral Kingship' (H. Cazelles), 864b; Betz et al., *Religion in Geschichte*, s.v. 'Salbung, i. Religionsgeschichte. ii. Altes Testament' (K. Prenner and I. Willi-Plein); see further below, p. 73.
24. For a king giving 'silver and gold' to a prospective ally in the Bible, see 1 Kings 10: 19.
25. IS, i, 332. Cf. ibid., i, 296, 335; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, x, 52, n. 334; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'ᶜAlam' (J. David-Weill); Hinds, 'Banners and battle cries', 8; Athamina, 'Black banners', 315–16; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xvii, 2 n. 8 (G. Hawting); Landau-Tasseron, 'Features', 316, 318; cf. Hawting, 'The "sacred offices"', 67.
26. Zuhayr, in Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, 47, §78, l. 15.
27. ᶜAntara, in Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, 21, §35, l. 8; cf. 24, §40, l. 16.
28. Shoufani, *Al-Riddah*, 79–83, 117–25.
29. Ṭab., i, 1953–6; Shoufani, *Al-Riddah*, 83–4, 125–31.
30. Shoufani, *Al-Riddah*, 85–9, 131–6.
31. Ṭab., i, 1987–8.
32. Ṭab., i, 1998–9; Shoufani, *Al-Riddah*, 89–95, 136–8.
33. Ṭab., i, 1891.
34. For the Prophet's delegates taking pledges of allegiance, see Donner, *Conquests*, 74, n. 94.
35. Ṭab., i, 1887.
36. See above, p. 35.
37. Ṭab., i, 1920–1, and above, Ch. 2 and p. 63.
38. Ṭab., i, 1880–1, 1922, 1939–40, 1945, 1949.

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39. Ṭab., i, 1886, 1897, 1938, 1969, 2003. Cf. the Paikuli inscription; see above, Introduction, n. 14.
40. See Pedersen, *Eid*, 57–8; Rubin, '*Barāʾa*'; Görke, 'al-Ḥudaybiya'.
41. See above, pp. 29–32. For early Islam, see, e.g., Ṭab., i, 1511, 1800, 1871, 1891, 1902, 1924, 1968, 2018.
42. Robinson, 'Conquest' (but cf. Conrad, 'Conquest', where it is proved that they are sometimes merely *topoi*).
43. See above, pp. 29–32.
44. Ṭab., i, 2292.
45. Ṭab., i, 2294.
46. Ṭab., i, 2294.
47. Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233) said that it referred to *sūrat al-Anfāl*, 'the spoils': Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, ii, 470.
48. Ṭab., i, 2100.
49. Ṭab., i, 2461.
50. Ṭab., i, 3283–4, 3289, 3292, 3296.
51. Ṭab., i, 3296; tr. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xvii, 43 (G. Hawting).
52. On which see Görke, 'al-Ḥudaybiya'.
53. e.g. al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ii, 238, bk 56.110.
54. Athamina, 'Pre-Islamic roots', 29 *et passim*.
55. Madelung, *Succession*, 28ff.; cf. Athamina, 'Pre-Islamic roots', 4–5.
56. Madelung, *Succession*, 55–6.
57. See above, pp. 4–5, 5–7; Rosenthal, *Political Thought*, 31, n. 20; Madelung, *Succession*, 55–6.
58. Madelung, *Succession*, 68ff.; Crone, '*Shūrā*', with 8–10 on possible pre-Islamic precedents for the institution.
59. Ṭab., i, 2799; Ṭab., i, 2727–8. Cf. the laconic 'in it (24/644), ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAffān . . . was made caliph' (*fīhā ustukhlafa ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAffān . . .*): Khal., 156; Yaq., ii, 186.
60. Ṭab., i, 2799–800.
61. Silverstein, *Postal Systems*, 42ff.
62. Khal., 169; Ṭab., i, 2964.
63. Bal., iv/1, 554, 586; Ibn Aᶜthām, *Futūḥ*, ii, 209.
64. Hinds, 'Murder', 458.
65. Ṭab., i, 3040–5. Cf. Humphreys, 'Qurʾānic myth', 282ff.
66. Ibn ᶜAsākir, *ᶜUthmān*, 376–9; Madelung, *Succession*, 129–31.
67. The verses cited are (in this order) Q 31.20, Q 14.34, Q 3.102–5, Q 5.8, Q 49.6–8, Q 3.77, Q 64.16, Q 16.93–6, Q 4.59, Q 24.55, Q 48.10. The letter that follows cites Q 6.159, Q 11.89–90, Q 33.15, Q 12.53. On later documents, see below, Chs 8, 9, 12 and 16.
68. Ṭab., i, 3042, 3045 *et passim*; Ibn ᶜAsākir, *ᶜUthmān*, 376, 378 *et passim*.
69. Humphreys, 'Qurʾānic myth', 282; Madelung, *Succession*, 131.
70. Alternative dates: between 11 and 13 Dhū al-Ḥijja 35 (10–12 June 656) and 18 Dhū al-Ḥijja 36 (7 June 657).
71. Madelung, *Succession*, 139–40, 147–8.
72. Ṭab., i, 3066–75, 3078; Madelung, *Succession*, 143ff.
73. Yaq., ii, 206–7; Ṭab., i, 3068–78; Madelung, *Succession*, 141ff.
74. Ṭab., i, 3087ff., 3131ff., 3236ff.

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75. For the terms of the *bayᶜa*s to ᶜAlī, see Ṭab., i, 3229, 3237, 3349, 3350–1, 3367, 3386–7.
76. e.g. Yaq., ii, 187, where ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. ᶜAwf 'struck the hand' of ᶜUthmān (*ṣafaqa ᶜalā yadihi*); Ṭab., i, 1900, where the Banū ᶜĀmir 'gave their hands for submission' (*wa-aᶜṭūhu bi-aydayhim ᶜalā al-islām*); Ṭab., i, 3161, for 'stretch out your hand' (*mudd yadaka*), and ii, 1, for 'hold out your hand' (*ubsuṭ yadaka*) to give the *bayᶜa*. See above, p. 28.
77. See above, pp. 64, 70, and Ṭab., i, 3226–7.
78. Ṭab., i, 3161, 3226–7. Cf. Athamina, 'Black banners', 316.
79. Crone, *Slaves*, 38, n. 272.
80. e.g. Ṭab., i, 3257. See above, p. 65.
81. al-Awtabī, *Early Islamic Family*, 22.
82. al-Awtabī, *Early Islamic Family*, 5–7, 22, n. 54.
83. *Agh.*, viii, 36, nn. 2, 3; al-Awtabī, *Early Islamic Family*, 2, 68ff.
84. See above, p. 64 and n. 23.
85. For pre-Islamic Arabian precedents for *ṭāᶜa*, see *CIH* 541, ll. 21–2; Biella, *Dictionary*, s.v. *ṭwᶜ*; Beeston et al., *Sabaic Dictionary*, s.v. *twᶜ*; Rabīᶜa b. Maqrūm, in al-Anbarī, *Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, ll. 7–8, i, 374, ll. 7–8, ii, 136; al-Nābigha, *Dīwān*, 35–6, l. 21; Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, 11, §19, l. 13. On its Arabian etymology, see Zammit, *Qurʾānic Arabic*, s.v. For *samᶜ*, see Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, s.v.; Biella, *Dictionary*, sv. *smᶜ*; Beeston et al., *Sabaic Dictionary*, s.v. *smᶜ*.
86. Nagel, 'Authority', 183, 195 and nn. 106, 107; Landau-Tasseron, 'Features', 317–18; Athamina, 'Pre-Islamic roots', 10, 29 *et passim*.
87. e.g. Deuteronomy 5: 27; 2 Kings 18: 12 and 23: 1ff.; Jeremiah 11: 1ff.
88. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 6ff.; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 690ff.; Hoyland, 'New documentary texts', 399; Dagron, *Emperor*, 48–53.
89. Cf. the shift from 'alliance' to 'allegiance' implied in the *ḥadīth*: Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances in Islam', 10ff.

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PART II

. . .

THE UMAYYAD CALIPHATE (*c.* 660–750)

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INTRODUCTION

By the 650s an Arabian–Muslim empire stretched across the East Mediterranean and the Middle East, from Tripoli, in North Africa, to Balkh, in northern Afghanistan. The establishment of garrison camps (*amṣār*) in many of the conquered provinces in the 630s and 640s began the sedentarisation of the Arabian armies and contributed to the consolidation of their cultural and religious unity, but did not prevent conflict over the leadership of the empire and the division of its resources. Two especially widespread outbreaks of such conflict dominated the second half of the seventh century (656–61 and 683–92). However, the idea that the Muslims should be led by one leader seems to have been sufficient to give internal conflict a centripetal character: competitors fought for control of the Muslim empire, not for independence from it. The victory of the Sufyanid branch of the Umayyad dynasty in the first civil war and the Marwanid branch of the same dynasty in the second meant that it fell to these scions of the Meccan, Qurashī clan of ʿAbd Shams to establish the institutions that would perpetuate the success of the Muslim 'conquest society'.

The Umayyad family, led by Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb b. Umayya, had been very influential in pre-Islamic Mecca. One of Abū Sufyān's sons, Yazīd (d. 639), had been among the leading conquerors of the Roman diocese of Oriens ('Syria') in the 630s. Another of Abū Sufyān's sons, the first Umayyad caliph, Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. *c*. 661–80), had been an emir there since 634. Many of the Umayyad clan are also said to have had commercial interests in Syria, which may have pre-dated the coming of Islam.[1] As a result of these connections, the Umayyads were able to draw upon the support of Syria's predominantly Ḥijāzī and South Arabian settlers, as well as upon indigenous Syrians – both the settled, predominantly Aramaic-speaking, populations of the villages and cities and the

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Arabic-speaking nomad tribes that occupied the semi-arid Syrian steppes and coexisted with the settled communites on its margins. Much of the Umayyad articulation of their legitimacy was directed at these constituencies of supporters: it combined the religious and political culture of the indigenous nomadic tribes of Syria and Mesopotamia, which had been influenced by their interaction with the imperial powers of Rome and Iran, with that of the Ḥijāz and of South Arabia; emigrants from the latter brought with them the cultural forms of Ethiopian and Sasanian Ḥimyar.

That the Umayyads did not simply become sub-Roman, Syro-Mesopotamian kings is testimony to the ideological coherence and cultural resilience of the Arabian conquerors of the Near East. It is true that the forms of the public expression of Umayyad authority had a sub-Roman character, with an increasingly Sasanian inflection; it could hardly be otherwise, since Roman and Iranian models were paradigms for imperial monarchy across the Middle East. However, Umayyad ideological claims had to persuade Arabian–Muslim audiences, both in Syria itself and in Egypt, Iraq and the frontiers, and they were shaped by the ideology of these groups. The Umayyads sought to present an image of monotheist monarchy that legitimated their power against the claims of their rivals within Islam, as well as against the alternative authority of Constantinople without it.

The pledge of allegiance (*bayᶜa*), contracted by a handclasp, remained the central means of communicating and affirming loyalty and leadership at the accessions of the Umayyads. Part of the explanation for this lies in the importance of the Syrian nomads to the Umayyads, and in the nomadic heritage of the Arabian Muslims of the provincial garrisons: pledged agreements, backed up with material reward, were the established method for contracting for nomads' military support. However, the terms of the Umayyad *bayᶜa*s also evince specific continuities from early seventh-century Arabian political culture: the pledge was an expression of religio-political allegiance, and particularly of a willingness to fight for God's earthly representatives, expressed in distinctively quranic language. These continuities reflect the great importance of the memory of the now obscure formative events of the early seventh century to the armies that the Umayyads and their rivals sought to influence in the late seventh and early eighth centuries.

Although the extent of the discontinuity between the Sufyanid and Marwanid eras is much debated, it is clear that the second civil war (683–92), in which Umayyad authority was temporarily eclipsed by the Zubayrid dynasty, marks a distinct watershed in Islamic history.[2] Under Marwān b. al-Ḥakam (r. 684–5) and then his son, ᶜAbd al-Malik (r. 685–705), and his grandson, al-Walīd (r. 705–15), the structures of imperial administration and government were developed and

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expanded, as they continued to be under their successors, most notably Hishām b. ᶜAbd al-Malik (r. 724–43). This has left its traces in the archaeological and architectural record: the public media of Near Eastern kingship – coins, clothing, palaces and places of worship – were used in a programme of the public expression of imperial power and authority, in which existing Roman and Sasanian models were adapted to proclaim Arabian and Islamic hegemony. The literary and papyrological record reflects a similar process in the written administration, which was centralised and increasingly employed Arabic (although its expansion and development were often advanced by non-Arabians from North Mesopotamia and Iraq, who imported and 'Arabised' indigenous practices in the written articulation of Umayyad legitimacy). However, the great expansion of the use of writing in the public articulation of caliphal authority occurred in the last two decades of the Marwanid period.

PATRIMONY AND DYNASTY UNDER THE UMAYYADS

Among the most important of the institutional innovations of the Umayyads was the establishment of a system of dynastic succession. The Arabian conquest of a world empire and the concentration of power in the hands of its ruler, the caliph, both allowed for a more structured system of succession among the Arabian–Muslims and also demanded it. If the unity of the newly acquired empire was to be maintained, an institution to organise the transfer of power from one generation of rulers to the next was necessary. The Umayyads established dynastic succession through the mechanism of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* ('succession to/possession of the covenant') whereby a pledge of allegiance was sworn to the incumbent caliph's nominated successor or successors, while he himself was still alive. The institution of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* was important in the transformation of the *bayᶜa* from a consensus-based, tribal custom into an instrument of monarchic power. It was an institution that spanned the Abbasid revolution of 747–50 and that would remain important in political theory long after the ninth century, when the nomination of caliphal successors ceased to occur on a regular basis.

That the Umayyads were the Qurashī sub-tribe first able to secure dynastic succession to the caliphate was a result of two pieces of good fortune. First, they were able to launch their bids for control of the newly conquered empire from the wealthy province of Syria, with which their family had a long association. Syria's fiscal, organisational and military resources gave them the coercive and organisational power to defeat their rivals, to impose dynastic succession and to establish the institutional and ideological structures to promote claims for its legitimacy. Second, the Umayyads were led by long-lived and talented politicians, notably Muᶜāwiya (r. 661–80) and ᶜAbd al-Malik (r. 685–705). Muᶜāwiya

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b. Abī Sufyān was the first caliph to attempt to begin a dynastic succession; in 680 he was succeeded by his son, Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya (r. 680–3), but Yazīd was never recognised by all his possible opponents, and civil war broke out on his death. His Marwanid cousins had more lasting success. The descendants of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam (r. 684–5) and his son, ᶜAbd al-Malik, ruled the empire for a further forty-five years. However, the final seven years of Marwanid rule witnessed the breakdown of consensus within the dynasty over the succession: three of ᶜAbd al-Malik's grandsons and another nephew fought over the caliphate in the period 743–50.

The Umayyad pattern of succession reflects the extent to which patrimony and dynasty are part of a spectrum of political cultures based on heredity. The absence of primogeniture from Arabian culture gave Umayyad dynastic succession its patrimonial dimension: the emphasis on the parity of agnatic relations had the potential to generate tensions between the caliph's sons and his brothers and nephews. Similar patterns are common wherever agnatically defined tribal groups come to control a polity in which power and authority is relatively concentrated in the person of the monarch and where division of his authority is not an option: the same situation pertained, for example, in Sasanian Iran and in seventh-century Byzantium.[3] Where the Umayyad situation differed was in the deep structural weaknesses and social and ideological tensions in their empire, which meant that the dynastic conflict of 743–50 resulted in a revolution and their fall from power.

THE SOURCES AND THEIR ANALYSIS

The foundation of a more effective state by the Marwanid caliphs after 684 generated more evidence than the earlier Sufyanid period (*c*. 660–83). However, a discussion of individual Marwanid accession rituals is rarely possible because of the lack of detail about any one accession in the literary sources. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 take a synthetic approach to the literary and material evidence for the early Marwanid pledge of allegiance, the establishment of dynastic succession and the ritual aspects of accession and succession, respectively. The end of the Marwanid period is something of an exception, in that the succession to Hishām (r. 724–43) is described in detail by sources that also preserve copies of a number of caliphal documents from 743 and 744. These documents from the later Marwanid period, which anticipate in some respects the better evidence for the Abbasid period, are the subject of Chapters 8 and 9. Another exception is Muᶜāwiya's accession in *c*. 660, which is described in considerable detail by a contemporaneous Syriac source, and this, together with the poetry associated with the succession of his son, Yazīd, is the subject of Chapter 4.

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NOTES

1. See now Crone, 'Quraysh and the Roman army'.
2. Recent contributions to the debate include Johns, 'Archaeology'; Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, 105ff.; cf. Foss, 'A Syrian coinage'; Hoyland, 'New documentary texts'.
3. See above, Introduction, nn. 11, 19 and 20.

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CHAPTER

4

SUFYANID ACCESSION AND SUCCESSION, *c.* 660–683

Only with the victory of the Marwanid Umayyads in the second civil war (683–92) does evidence for caliphal accession and sucession become plentiful. However, what evidence there is for the Sufyanid Umayyad period indicates that many aspects of Marwanid ritual had precedents in late-seventh-century practice. Indeed, with hindsight, the reign of Muᶜāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 661–80) and that of Yazīd, his son (r. 680–3), can be seen as a period of experimentation with the trappings of Near Eastern monarchy, and the prelude to the establishment of a more successful Islamic state by their Marwanid cousins after the second *fitna* of 683–92. This is evident both in an account of the rituals of Muᶜāwiya's accession, which an early Syriac source records in some detail, and in the efforts to establish Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya as Muᶜāwiya's successor. In what follows, the Syriac acccount of Muᶜāwiya's accession is analysed, before a discussion of the efforts to secure the succession of Yazīd.

THE ACCESSION OF MUᶜĀWIYA B. ABĪ SUFYĀN

The accession of Muᶜāwiya as caliph at the end of the first civil war in *c.* 660 is unique among Umayyad accession rituals for being recorded in a near-contemporaneous source. The 'Maronite Chronicle' in which it is described was compiled between 664 and 727 – most likely in the seventeen years between 664 and 681 – by an anonymous Maronite Christian author living in Syria.[1] It preserves three accounts of pledges of allegiance given to Muᶜāwiya at the end of the first civil war (656–61). First the chronicle mentions the recognition of Muᶜāwiya's authority by Arabs and their commanders in Iraq after the assassination of ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ('A'). Then it presents two descriptions ('B' and

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'C') of the accession of Muᶜāwiya as 'king' (Syr. *malkā*), the first of which ('B') specifies that the ceremony took place in Jerusalem. (The three accounts are separated by a few lines on conflict between Jacobite Christians and the author's Maronite sect, and on earthquakes – these are omitted here.)

> ('A') [*Lacuna in the MS, followed by a very short fragment*] . . . ᶜAlī, too, threatened to go up once again against Muᶜāwiya, but they struck him while he was at prayer at al-Ḥīra and killed him. Muᶜāwiya went down to al-Ḥīra, where all the nomad (*Ṭayyāyē*) forces there pledged allegiance to him (lit. 'proffered their hand to him', *yahbw leh īdā*) whereupon he returned to Damascus. In 970 of the Seleucid era, the 17th year of Constans (38/658–9), on a Friday in June, at the second hour, there was a violent earthquake in Palestine . . .
> ('B') In 971 of the Seleucid era, Constans' 18th year (39/659–60), many nomads gathered at Jerusalem and made Muᶜāwiya king (*waᶜᵉbadwhū malkā lᵉMaᶜwiyā*) and he went up and sat down on Golgotha; he prayed there, and went to Gethsemane and went down to the tomb of the blessed Mary to pray in it. In those days, when the Arabs were assembled there with Muᶜāwiya, there was an earthquake and a violent tremor and the greater part of Jericho fell . . .
> ('C') In July of the same year the emirs and many nomads (*āmīrā wᵉṬayyāyē*) gathered and pledged allegiance (lit. 'proffered their right hand') to Muᶜāwiya (*yahbw yāmīnā*). Then an order went out that he should be proclaimed king (*nethkrez malkā*) in all the villages and cities of his dominion and that they should make acclamations and invocations (Gk *klēseis*, *phōnás*) to him. He also minted gold and silver, but it was not accepted, because it had no cross on it. Furthermore, Muᶜāwiya did not wear a crown (*kᵉlīla*) like other kings in the world (*ḥᵉrīyā malakā dahwaw bᵉᶜalamā*). He placed his throne (*kūrsīs*) in Damascus and refused to go to Muḥammad's (*Maḥmat*) throne.[2]

As we might expect, the Syrian compiler is relatively ignorant of events in Iraq. He confuses the new Arabian garrison of Kufa, where ᶜAlī actually seems to have been assassinated, with the nearby seat of the pre-Islamic Naṣrid kings at al-Ḥīra. He also places this pledge before the accession of Muᶜāwiya in Jerusalem. In fact the sequence should probably be 'B', 'C', 'A'.[3] The muddled chronology may be the result of the compiler's attempt to make Muᶜāwiya's accession coincide with the portentous earthquakes that signal (the Christian) God's disapproval.[4]

However, the two Syriac accounts of Muᶜāwiya's accession in Syria ('B' and 'C') are not only closer to contemporaneous evidence for early Umayyad accession ritual than anything in the extant Arabic–Islamic material but are also more detailed in many respects. We can be reasonably confident that they are near contemporaneous, even perhaps eyewitness accounts, copied by the compiler of

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the chronicle. Thus, 'B' and 'C' are probably two different versions of one pledge of allegiance to Muᶜāwiya as *amīr al-muʾminīn* ('Commander of the Faithful') at Jerusalem that some Arabic traditions place in Rabīᶜ al-awwal 40/June–August 660.[5]

Version 'B' specifically locates the ritual in Jerusalem and contains the intriguing references to Muᶜāwiya's prayers at Golgotha and Mary's tomb.[6] Al-Maqdisī (fl. late tenth century), states that Muᶜāwiya had rebuilt the mosque on the Temple Mount, originally built by ᶜUmar I, while he was governor of Syria, and that his accessional *bayᶜa* took place there.[7] This lends some credibility to the Syriac report. Jerusalem was a site of royal pilgrimage and victory ritual for Muᶜāwiya's Syrian nomad allies: it is possible that either the emperor Maurice (r. 582–602) or the emperor Heraclius (r. 610–41) had built the Golden Gate on the east side of the Temple Mount, either in the late sixth century or in 630;[8] Mary's tomb had been built by Maurice;[9] Heraclius had certainly made a triumphant entry into Jerusalem in 630 to restore the fragments of the True Cross to their rightful place after his victory against Sasanian Iran.[10] Among Muᶜāwiya's Arabian–Muslim following, who were primarily from the Ḥijāz and Yemen, Jerusalem also had great importance: the city was associated with Adam, Abraham, David and Solomon;[11] the earliest Muslims were said to have prayed towards Jerusalem before they turned to Mecca.[12] It is therefore very possible that the Syriac account of Muᶜāwiya's visit to the pilgrimage sites of Jerusalem does reflect actual events and that al-Maqdisī's report that this accession ceremony took place in the recently rebuilt mosque on the Temple Mount is also correct.

The surprise of the author of 'C' at the details of the ceremony reflects the extent to which the Arabian conquerors of Syria had not simply adopted the religious and political traditions of those they now ruled. The omission of crosses from Muᶜāwiya's coinage was a self-confident gesture that suggests a repudiation of Christianity along the lines of that found in the Qurʾān – albeit one that seems to have fallen foul of the conservatism that tends to constrain sudden changes in the appearance of money. After the coins, Muᶜāwiya's failure to 'wear a crown like other kings in the world' was the next thing considered to be worth remarking upon. The Syrian author considered Muᶜāwiya 'a king in the world' – that is, a 'world-ruler' – after the model of the Roman emperors, or Alexander before them (whose accession marked the beginning of the Seleucid era used by this and other Syriac chronographers).[13] To the observer who wrote the chronicle, the lack of a crown was remarkable – the most important emblem of kingship was lacking. This probably reflects Arabian expectations about leadership: Muᶜāwiya was claiming to be *ᶜabd Allāh* and *amīr al-muʾminīn* or *khalīfat Allāh* ('The Servant of God' and 'Commander of the Faithful' or 'Deputy of God');[14] true

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kingship, as the Qurʾān states, belongs only to God; there was a notable hostility towards loyalty to 'kings', or 'possessors of the crown', in pre-Islamic Arabian culture.[15]

'C' also mentions the proclamation of the accession in Muʿāwiya's 'dominion'. Given that other details reflect what we know from the later Arabic tradition, we should probably assume that such a proclamation took place, either in Syria, or even further afield; one of the few instruments of political administration that the Arabians brought with them from the Peninsula was the nomad tradition of effective long-distance communication by rider.[16] Alongside the reference to the promulgation of the *bayʿa* we also find references to the ancient rights of kings to strike precious metal coinage and receive public acclamation; again, it seems likely that they reflect something of actual events.[17]

SUFYANID ACCESSIONAL RITUAL AND THE BASIS OF SUFYANID SUPPORT

When read in the context of what is known of early Sufyanid history, the account of Muʿāwiya's accession reveals much about his attempt to assert his legitimacy through a ritual of monarchic accession. At his accession, Muʿāwiya is said to have been between 53 and 65 years old. He had been the governor of parts of Syria for nearly twenty years, and of all of it for more than a decade, inheriting power from his brother Yazīd, who had been among the conquerors of the province.[18] Muʿāwiya's success in the civil war had depended upon the loyalty and unity of his Syrian army (and upon the support of the settled Syrian Christian population[19]). His strategy in 656 had been to sit and wait for rival factions in the Ḥijāz and Iraq to slaughter one another;[20] what may have been a near defeat in open battle against ʿAlī and the Kufans at Ṣiffīn in 657 is said to have been saved by calling for negotiation (*shūrā*) and waiting for ʿAlī's support to disintegrate while his own army remained loyal and united.

The Syrian army was in part composed of the Arabians who had settled in Syria after its swift conquest in 634–40: Meccans, Medinans and other tribes from the Ḥijāz and from South Arabia. An estimate based on the later traditions that puts their total number at around 24,000 has been accepted as plausible.[21] This would have been increased by reinforcements and later arrivals.[22] However, the migrants of 634–40 were vastly outnumbered by Syria's indigenous, often Christianised, Arabic-speaking nomads, from whom the rest of Muʿāwiya's military support derived and whose loyalty he made a particular effort to cultivate. Important tribal groups that already inhabited Syria and the Arabian and Iraqi steppes included Ghassān, Lakhm, Ṭayyiʾ, Taghlib and Kalb; all are named as having been present at Ṣiffīn in 657. Although some Syrian troops were settled

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in new garrisons, no new settlements on the scale of Iraq's Kufa and Basra and Egypt's Fustat were established. Instead the land of the four (later five) *jund*s ('army districts'), into which the Arabian conquerors had divided the province of Syria, continued to sustain large populations of nomadic pastoralists who served in the army.

As we have seen, the Syrian tribal groups had long been in the political and cultural orbit of Rome and Iran, and the religious and political traditions of the tribes had been shaped by this history. Their conversion to Christianity is testimony to this; Rome preferred to make alliances with fellow Christians, and even the Sasanian kings had recognised the political potential in tolerance of non-Chalcedonian Christian groups.[23] In the sixth century, gatherings at Syrian sites of Christian pilgrimage had been the locations at which the Jafnid leaders of the Banū Ghassān had gathered their supporters.[24] As we have seen, Maurice and Heraclius had shown great interest in Jerusalem. Davidic and Solomonic imagery was central to the public expressions of Heraclius' authority, and his visit to the city of David, seat of Solomon's Temple and site of Jesus' crucifixion, reaffirmed the city's association with monotheist Roman imperial authority. Muᶜāwiya's accession ritual was in the tradition of Ghassanid kingship and the Christian Roman empire with which the Syrian nomadic tribes that were the mainstay of his support would have been familiar; at the same time, it was a ritual that reflected the religio-political traditions of his own Ḥijāzī family and their Arabian supporters.

DYNASTIC SUCCESSION: MUᶜĀWIYA AND YAZĪD

Sometime between the month of Rabīᶜ al-awwal in the year 49 (April–May 669) and the year 59 (678–9), pledges of allegiance were taken to Yazīd as Muᶜāwiya's successor: *bayᶜa*s were taken from the Syrian army, from delegations (*wufūd*) from Iraq and from Muslims in the Ḥijāz. The *bayᶜa* from the Syrian army may have been directly connected to Yazīd's leadership of a raid against the Romans, which took place in the same year according to some accounts. The *bayᶜa*s in the Ḥijāz were associated with either the *ḥajj* or the *ᶜumra* pilgrimage to Mecca, or both, which were led by either Yazīd, or Muᶜāwiya, or both. The differing accounts prevent a definite reconstruction of the sequence of events, but the tradition is in agreement about the lengths to which Muᶜāwiya and Yazīd went in order to attempt to secure the succession, and the difficulties they faced.[25]

Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya had natural allies in the Kalb, the tribe who stood to benefit most from his succession. Kalb led the much larger federation of the Banū Quḍāᶜa, of whom they were the most powerful sub-tribe. Kalb dominated the steppes between Syria and Najd. They were former Roman allies, who had

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'stood aside' at the conquests before forging links with the Umayyad dynasty via ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (r. 644–56).[26] Muʿāwiya had developed these links, marrying both Maysūn b. Baḥdal al-Kalbī, who was the mother of Yazīd,[27] and Nāʾila b. Umāra al-Kalbī, her paternal cousin.[28] Yazīd's residence was at Ḥuwwārīn, between Damascus and Palmyra, in the heart of Kalbī territory.[29]

Beyond his allies in Kalb and Quḍāʿa, and his own Banū ʿAbd Shams, some of whom needed to be persuaded to support him, Yazīd also needed the support of other tribes in the Syrian army. Although Quḍāʿa dominated most of Syria, the northern frontier was occupied by tribes who traced their descent to Qays. By leading military campaigns against Rome, Yazīd may have hoped to foster support among this tribal grouping.[30] Muʿāwiya is also said to have encouraged him to seek support beyond the Kalb.[31] However, this policy appears to have had very limited success: poetry originating among the Qaysī tribes of the north of Syria criticised the taking of a pledge of allegiance to 'the son of a Kalbī woman';[32] in a tribal society, genealogy expressed political allegiance. When the powerful non-Umayyad Companion, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām, declared himself caliph on Yazīd's death in 683, many Syrian Qaysīs backed him against his Umayyad rivals.[33]

The mechanisms of persuasion in the provinces were the traditional channels of Arabian politics, transposed to the new, imperial context: the face-to-face politics of the *wufūd* ('delegations', mentioned in the second poem), *majlis* ('meeting', 'audience') and *khuṭba* ('public speech', 'sermon'). In the provinces of Iraq and the Ḥijāz, the ground for these negotiations was prepared by Muʿāwiya's emirs, Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba and Ziyād b. Abīhi. The details of these encounters are no doubt the product of the historico-literary tradition of which their narratives form a part, but the social, cultural and political framework in which they are represented as having taken place is different from that of the eighth-century Marwanids, who imposed dynastic succession with less opposition, and certainly from that of the Abbasids. It was the politics of the tribal polity; a small number of face-to-face encounters in each locale determined the outcome of a caliphal initiative. The role of the *ḥajj* as an occasion when the Ḥijāzīs could be petitioned directly by the caliph is a prominent feature of the *khabar*s: both Khalīfa and al-Ṭabarī tie the promulgation of the *bayʿa* outside Syria to the pilgrimage to Mecca.[34]

The later sources make much of the refusals to pledge allegiance to Yazīd in the Ḥijāz. Among those who refused are said to have been al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr and ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās (the latter omitted in at least one early account). Again, we are in the realm of the historico-literary tradition; that Ibn ʿAbbās should be honoured in some accounts by his refusal to make the *bayʿa* to Yazīd is most

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comprehensible in the light of the Abbasid Revolution, in which his descendants took power from the Umayyads; in Khalīfa's account, only the first four individuals are mentioned, but they serve as mouthpieces for a short history of caliphal succession before the first *fitna*. The story of the refusals may or may not be true; certainly it neatly expresses the political tensions on the eve of the second *fitna*. The reaction against the activities of Muᶜāwiya and Yazīd in the Ḥijāz may be reflected in a tradition that in 683 Ibn al-Zubayr called not for a *bayᶜa* to himself, but for a *shūrā* ('consultation in the choice of caliph'), and another that states that, after a rebellion, Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya demanded a *bayᶜa* according to which the Medinans would become his slaves (*khawal* or *ᶜabd qinn*) – the implication being that Yazīd had usurped God's *mulk* ('sovereignty', 'kingship') in imposing his tyrannical authority on the Muslims rather than receiving their willing obedience.[35]

POETRY AND THE SUCCESSION AT THE SUFYANID COURT

As we have seen, Syria was the cornerstone of Muᶜāwiya's power and so many Syrians would have been natural supporters of Yazīd's succession. However, while Yazīd's Kalbī *akhwāl* ('maternal relatives') were his natural allies,[36] other groups needed to be persuaded, including the wider kinship-group of the Banū ᶜAbd Shams, which included the rest of the Umayyad dynasty. The tenth-century *Kitāb al-Aghānī* ('Book of Songs') includes two poems said to have been performed by the Iraqi poet Miskīn (d. *c.* 708) at a *majlis* concerning the succession.[37] Although the compilation is relatively late, it is very possible that the poems do reflect material from the Sufyanid court; poetry is among the earliest surviving material in the later tradition, and the content of the poems is not anachronistic.

If I am summoned as Miskīn, I am a son of the Assembly (*Ibn Maᶜshar*), most protected and defended of people.
Their journey to you, Commander of the Faithful, stirs up the sandgrouse at night, as they keep a night vigil,
And they are shaded from the noon sun like their gazelle, when it prostrates itself with horns on the ground (*wa-hājirat ẓullat ka-anna ẓubāʾahā idhā mā ittaqathā bi'l-qurūn sujūd*).
I wish I knew what Ibn ᶜĀmir and Marwān say, or what Saᶜīd says,
Go slowly, sons of God's Caliphs (*banī khulafāʾ Allāh*), for the Merciful only takes a position when He wants;
When the Lord of the western pulpit (*minbar*) vacates it, and the Commander of the Faithful is Yazīd.

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To the travelling bird good fortune! Good fortune and luck increases for every man.

For the best of people remain in the highest rank, and the delegations to you continue to vie together in glory (*fa-lā zilta aᶜlā al-nāsi kaᶜban wa-lā yazalu wufūd tusāmīhā ilayka wufūd*),

And the house of government (*bayt al-mulk*) continues, high above you, to have tent-ropes and tent-posts set up for it.

The cooking-pots of Ibn Ḥarb are like watering-troughs, under them supporting stones, like the baby ostriches crouching motionless (*qudūr Ibn Ḥarb ka'l-jawābī wa-taḥtahā athāfin ka-amthāl al-riʾāl rukūd*).

Miskīn's first poem is a *qaṣīda* in the pre-Islamic tradition. It places Muᶜāwiya in the role of the *sayyid*, participating in a *mashwara* with the other senior members of the Banū Umayya. The *raḥīl* ('journey') element introduces the subject of the protection of the caliph – and hence the covenant with him – through the trope of the journey towards him at night, which 'stirs up sand-grouse' and the image of gazelle sheltering from the noon sun in the desert. Both the grouse and gazelles recall other animal imagery in the iconography of Near Eastern kingship.[38] Royal shade is also a trope of Near Eastern royal imagery;[39] in a poetic expression of the idea of the caliph as the 'shadow of God on earth', the gazelles' prostration (*sujūd*) echoes prostration before a king, from which the form of late antique Judaic and Islamic prayer derived.[40] Then the poet moves to the question in hand, the attitude of three senior descendants of ᶜAbd Shams (the father of Umayya): ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜĀmir, Saᶜīd b. al-ᶜĀṣ and Marwān b. al-Ḥakam. Each of the three was a close relative of the third caliph, ᶜUthmān, in vengeance for whom Muᶜāwiya had fought ᶜAlī in the first civil war; each was also resident in the Ḥijāz, with the status to challenge Yazīd's succession. The final two lines represent the caliphate as the inheritance of ᶜAbd Shams: they are the 'sons of God's caliphs', but also assert that God's will determines who among them becomes the 'Commander of the Faithful' and occupies the 'western *minbar*' – that is, the mosque pulpit in Syria, the seat of the Umayyads.

The second poem approaches the question of the succession more obliquely, but is directed at the same problem of potential challenges to the succession from within ᶜAbd Shams: in praising the Banū Ḥarb sub-tribe of ᶜAbd Shams it excludes those named in the first poem – ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜĀmir, Marwān b. al-Ḥakam and Saᶜīd b. al-ᶜĀṣ – but includes Muᶜāwiya and his son Yazīd. Such genealogical distinctions indicate the diffuse nature of the charisma of leadership in the early Umayyad milieu, in which the *ᶜaṣaba* – the group of agnatic relatives – could be defined with reference to more or less distant ancestors, and in which seniority in the wider tribal unit was the basis of political power. The praise deploys the

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usual panegyric formulas: the Banū Ḥarb bring good fortune and prosperity; they appoint the best of leaders from among the delegations that come to seek favour from them; the 'house of government', portrayed as a tent, is secure; they are generous, with 'cooking-pots (as large as) watering-troughs' (*qudūr Ibn Ḥarb ka'l-jawābī*). This last image recalls both pre-Islamic poetic convention and the Qurʾān's account of the Āl Dāwūd, the descendants of King David, for whom the *jinn*s made 'basins as large as watering-troughs and cooking-pots (firmly fixed)' (*jifānin ka'l-jawābi wa-qudūrin rāsibātin*).[41] The Banū Ḥarb, the image suggests, are like the archetypal House of David, God's first royal dynasty, in their generosity. In their use of Arabian monotheist panegyric, the Sufyanids anticipated the rapid evolution of the expression of Islamic monarchic authority that took place under their Marwanid cousins.

NOTES

1. Palmer et al., *Seventh Century*, 29.
2. *Chronica Minora*, ii, 69–70; tr. Palmer et al., *Seventh Century*, 29–31, with slight modifications. See also Nöldeke, 'Geschichte', 85ff.
3. Palmer et al., *Seventh Century*, 30, n. 134.
4. Palmer et al., *Seventh Century*, 31, n. 141. For anti-Umayyad Arabic apocalyptic traditions about the same earthquake, see Donner, *Narratives*, 48.
5. Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, 101, citing Nöldeke, 'Geschichte', 85, 89, 95–6. Cf. *Taʾrīkh al-Khulafāʾ*, fo. 50b, l. 17; Ṭab., ii, 4–5; al-Maqdisī, *al-Badʾ*, iv, 87; Caetani, *Chronographia*, i, 453; Duri, 'Jerusalem', 108–9. However, there is insufficient evidence to be certain: Petersen, '*c*Alī and Mu*c*āwiya', 176–7.
6. The crucifixion is clearly denied in the Qurʾān (Q 4.147), but in late antiquity Golgotha was associated with Adam, Abraham, Isaac and Solomon, all of whom are quranic figures, as is Mary; see Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 36, 157ff., 174ff.
7. al-Maqdisī, *al-Badʾ*, iv, 87.
8. Mango, 'Temple Mount', 1–16.
9. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 4, 61, 90ff.
10. Drijvers, 'Heraclius'.
11. See above, n. 6.
12. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ḳibla i. Ritual and Legal Aspects' (A. J. Wensinck [D. A. King]).
13. Radtke, *Weltgeschichte*, 13; Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 12–14; Howard-Johnston, 'Armenian historians', 59–60.
14. The earliest secure attestations of these titles are 661 and 694, respectively; see Miles, 'Miḥrāb and *c*Anazah', 171; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 690–1. For the likelihood that both are much older than that, see Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 6ff.; Johns, 'Archaeology'; above, p. 74.
15. See above, pp. 32–3.
16. Silverstein, *Postal Systems*, 42–59.
17. On the coins, see above, Introduction to Part II, n. 2.
18. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Mu*c*āwiya I b. Abī Sufyān' (M. Hinds).

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19. Palmer et al., *Seventh Century*, 29.
20. For the view of an Armenian Christian observer, see Sebeos, *Armenian History*, i, 154, §176.
21. Donner, *Conquests*, 118–19; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Shām, al-Shaᵓm 2. History' (H. Lammens [C. E. Bosworth]).
22. Donner, *Conquests*, 126–7.
23. Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, 204–5; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, 336–7, 347–9.
24. See above, Ch. 1, n. 62.
25. Yaq., ii, 270–1, and Mas., iii, §1827–§1830 (v, 69–73), give the earliest and latest dates, respectively. Other accounts include Khal., 211, 213ff.; Ibn Qutayba, *ᶜUyūn*, i, 169, ii, 228–9; Ṭab., ii, 173–7; Ibn ᶜAbd Rabbihi, *al-ᶜIqd*, iv, 368ff. (ii, 302ff.). On Muᶜāwiya's offer of the succession to al-Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī (!), see Ṭab., iii, 430–1; Mas., iv, §2414 (vi, 203–4). Cf. Tyan, *Institutions*, i, 258–60.
26. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ḳalb b. Wabara' (i, J. W. Fück; ii, A. A. Dixon).
27. Yaq. ii, 286; Ṭab. ii, 204; Crone, 'Qays and Yemen', 44.
28. Ṭab. ii, 204–5.
29. Lammens, *Moᶜâwia*, 52, 381.
30. Bal., iv/1, 86, 109–10 = Bal.(D), iv, 98–9, 127; Ṭab., ii, 86.
31. Lammens, *Moᶜâwia*, 329.
32. Crone, 'Qays and Yemen', 45.
33. See below, pp. 102–6.
34. See above, n. 25.
35. Khal., 239; Bal., v, 69; Ṭab., ii, 423.
36. See above, pp. 90–1; cf. Smith and Goldziher, *Kinship*, 50, 71.
37. *Agh.*, xviii, 71–3. Cf. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Miskīn al-Dārimī' (C. Pellat).
38. Bowersock et al., *Late Antiquity*, s.v. 'Baptistries', 333b; Fowden, *Quṣayr ᶜAmra*, 9, 116–18.
39. Cf. e.g. Ps. 91:1; Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 17.
40. Khaleel, 'Muslim prayer', 17–28.
41. Q 34.13; cf. al-Nābigha's panegyric to al-Nuᶜmān in Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, 14, §24, l. 4.

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CHAPTER

5

THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE IN THE EARLY TRADITION AND POETRY, *c.* 680–*c.* 710

For all that the 'Maronite Chronicle' attests to some of the details of Muᶜāwiya's accession in Jerusalem in *c.* 660, there is no evidence for what was actually said at the Temple Mount, nor, beyond a hostility to the imposition of dynastic succession, does the later Arabic–Islamic tradition tell us with any verifiable accuracy what was pledged to Yazīd in *c.* 670 and reaffirmed in 680. From after the turn of the century, the evidential situation begins to improve. There is good evidence that some of the earliest extant versions of Islamic legal traditions (*ḥadīth*) took shape in the early eighth-century (although they are now extant only in ninth- and tenth-century compilations). When read alongside contemporaneous poetry from the early Marwanid court, and from the Marwanids' opponents, a consistent picture of the late-seventh and early eighth-century pledge of allegiance emerges. Nomads and former nomads, having made an emigration (*hijra*) to a garrison for jihad, were bound by pledges to obey their leader and not to 'desert', 'revert to nomadism' or 'apostatize' (*taᶜarraba*, *irtadda*, *irfaḍḍa*). Those who violated this pledge were 'throwers-off' of allegiance (*khulaᶜāʾ*), outside 'protection under covenant' (*jiwār*, *dhimma*), without rights and potentially liable to execution. Both the legal traditions and the poetry also emphasise the monotheist and soteriological basis of the pledge: death without a *bayᶜa* is a 'pagan', or *jāhilī*, death; indeed, for the Kharijite rebels against the caliphs the *bayᶜa* is very explicitly a 'sale' of one's life in jihad.

What is known of the early seventh-century Ḥijāz would suggest that these ideas and practices evolved from those of the earliest Muslims. The earliest Marwanid texts, such as the panegyric of al-Akhṭal of *c.* 691 for ᶜAbd al-Malik, make most sense if they are read as the efforts of a ruling elite seeking to co-opt and develop the nascent Islamic ideology to legitimate their power. For al-Akhṭal,

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failure to pledge allegiance to the Umayyads is equated with unbelief – both earthly and spiritual benefits are obtained through loyalty to the Umayyads. Furthermore, in the speeches of their Iraqi governors Khālid and al-Ḥajjāj (from *c*. 690–1 and 694–5), it is possible to connect the pledge of loyalty to the early Marwanid military commanders and provincial governors to the nexus of ideas around *hijra*, *taᶜarrub* and *bayᶜa* ('emigration for war', 'reversion to nomadism' and 'the pledge of allegiance') that are found in the poetry and the legal tradition.

The oath of allegiance in the early legal tradition

Because the pledge of allegiance was usually a pledge for loyalty in war, it entailed the obligation to settle in a garrison, ready to campaign in holy war (*hijra*). One group of legal traditions appears to be a product of a debate about this obligation for *hijra*.[1] The Prophet is said to have cursed those who returned to the desert after having emigrated (*man badā baᶜda hijra*), but to have permitted abandoning one's garrison in time of civil war (*fitna*):[2]

> The Messenger of God said: 'May God curse those who return to the desert after migration! May God curse those who return to the desert after migration! May God curse those who return to the desert after migration! Except in civil war; truly the desert is better than staying (in the garrison and taking part) in civil war (*al-maqām fi'l-fitna*).'[3]

In the Qurʾān, *fitna* refers to 'trial', 'temptation' or 'scandal'.[4] Thus, although an early seventh-century context is conceivable, it seems more likely that the tradition reflects disputes about the legitimacy of withdrawing from the polity completely during the civil wars of 656–61 or 683–92.[5] This interpretation is supported by a comparison with other, similar traditions, in which *fitna* is explicitly understood to mean 'civil war' between Muslims and in which *taᶜarrub* implies desertion from military service; the use of *fitna* in this sense of civil war suggests that the words have been retrospectively attributed to Muḥammad.

One report is explicitly given a late-seventh- or early eighth-century context by the material that frames the tradition: the Umayyad governor of Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (r. 694–715), is the audience for the report. In it, 'returning to being a nomad Arab' (*taᶜarrub*) is equated with apostasy (*irtidād*):

> Ḥatim reported to us from Yazīd b. Abī ᶜUbayda from Salama b. al-Akwaᶜ that he had an audience with al-Ḥajjāj, who said, 'O Ibn al-Akwaᶜ you have turned back (or 'apostatized') and reverted to the desert (*irtaddat ᶜalā ᶜaqibayka*

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> *wa-taᶜarrabat*).' He said, 'No, because the Messenger of God permitted going into the desert to me.' . . .[6]

Another tradition purports to relate a prophecy of Muḥammad about the future, but, like all predictive material, its point of actual origin is almost certainly the event to which it refers – in this case, the 'civil wars' (*fitan*):

> The Messenger of God said, 'It will soon be that the best of the wealth of the Muslim will be a flock which he leads at the top of the mountains and places where rain falls, fleeing with his religion from civil wars (*yafirru bi-dīnihi min al-fitan*).'[7]

In both texts, the same logic applies as in the so-called wars of apostasy (*ḥurūb al-ridda*) of 632–4: rejecting political authority, and the obligations it required (primarily military service and the payment of tax), is equivalent to rejecting God and His community; or, to put it another way, it is equivalent to rejecting *islām*, in the sense of 'submission' to the new religio-political dispensation. The implication in the latter two *ḥadīth*, however, as in the first *ḥadīth* about the Prophet's curse, is that in some circumstances, particularly in civil war, abandoning one's *hijra* to a garrison is acceptable. In this concern with the legitimacy of desertion, the tensions and conflicts of the mid–late-seventh-century political crises in the Muslim empire are very evident.

Indeed, a few accounts of the pledges of allegiance said to have been given by delegations to the Prophet in *c*. 630–1 make a distinction between the *bayᶜat al-ᶜarabiyya* (or *al-aᶜrāb*, or *al-ḥāḍira*) and a *bayᶜat al-hijra* – that is, between a 'pledge of allegiance of the nomads' and a 'pledge of allegiance for emigration' or for 'settlement'.[8] As we have seen, to abandon one's migration to a garrison (*hijra*) by returning to pastoral activity (*taᶜarrub*) was a reprehensible act – a 'reversion' sometimes described by a verb used in the Qurʾān with the sense of 'to apostatize' (*irtadda*),[9] presumably because of the violation of God's covenant that it entailed.[10] What these traditions about the *bayᶜat al-hijra* and the *bayᶜat al-ᶜarabiyya* add is that they make explicit the link between the 'oath of allegiance' and the debate about abandoning one's garrrison. It seems likely that this distinction again reflects later, seventh- and early eighth-century disputes about membership of the *umma*, either 'as nomadic allies' of the Muslims (*ka-aᶜrāb al-Muslimīn*, as some of the traditions say), or by joining them as full partners, participating actively in their holy war.[11] (The tradition *might* actually *also* reflect Muḥammad's practice – we cannot now tell.)

One example of someone who is said to have done something similar to what these traditions discuss is the famous warrior ᶜUbayd Allāh b. al-Ḥurr al-Juᶜfī. On

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the death of Muᶜāwiya in 680, ᶜUbayd Allāh concluded that no one was worthy of his allegiance, left his garrison in Kufa and sat out the early years of the second *fitna* near the old Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon as the independent leader (*amīr*) of a few hundred outlaws (*khulaᶜāʾ*, lit. 'throwers-off' of allegiance), before eventually pledging loyalty to ᶜAbd al-Malik, in whose service he was killed in 687.[12] The link between *hijra* and *bayᶜa* made in the Prophetic traditions of the early eighth century can be seen in the name given to ᶜUbayd Allāh b. Ḥurr's followers: *khulaᶜāʾ* (sing. *khalīᶜ*). In pre-Islamic times, the *khalīᶜ* was an outlaw – someone cast out from his tribe for violating its customs and therefore placed beyond its protection (*jiwār*, *dhimma*).[13] In Islam, *khalᶜ* ('throwing off' [a covenant]') became associated with the violation of one's *bayᶜa*, the covenant for membership of the monotheist polity that guaranteed one's security. Thus, the abandoning of the garrison to which one had migrated, one's religion and one's imam or emir were very closely related concepts at the turn of the seventh and eighth centuries.

Indeed, 'throwing off' allegiance (*khalaᶜa*), 'untying' it (*nakatha*) or the 'withdrawal of one's pledge for obedience' (lit. 'one's hand from willing obedience', *nazaᶜa yadahu min al-ṭāᶜa*) in time of *fitna* are the subjects of a number of further Prophetic traditions. An important early authority for them is ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜUmar (*c*. 610–93), who is said to have advocated unity at Medina on the outbreak of the second civil war in 683 and preached the illegitimacy of breaking the *bayᶜa*:

> When the people threw off allegiance (*khalaᶜa*) to Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya, Ibn ᶜUmar gathered his sons and his family. Then he said the shahada. Then he said, 'To begin: we have already pledged allegiance to this man according to the pact of God and His Messenger (*fa-inna qad bāyaᶜnā hādhā al-rajul ᶜalā bayᶜ Allāh wa-rasūlihi*), and I heard the Prophet say: "Truly a flag is raised for the traitor (*al-ghādir*) on the Day of Resurrection, (on which) is stated of what his betrayal consists, and that there is no greater treachery, besides idolatry, than to pledge allegiance to a man according to the pact of God and His Messenger and then to undo (*nakatha*) his *bayᶜa*." So let none of you throw off allegiance to Yazīd nor any one of you take a prominent position in this matter (*yushrifanna fī-hādhā al-amr*), for there will be a cutting-off between me and him (*fa-yakūna ṣaylam baynī wa-baynahu*).'[14]

That damnation is the penalty for violating the *bayᶜa* is expressed in similar terms in another tradition, also often attributed to ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜUmar:

> I heard the Messenger of God say, 'Whoever withdraws his hand from obedience has no defense on the Day of Resurrection, and whoever dies in separation from the community dies a pagan death' (*man nazaᶜa yadahu min al-ṭāᶜa fa-lā*

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> *ḥujja lahu yawm al-qiyāma wa-man māta mufāriqan li'l-jamāᶜa māta mīta jāhiliyya*).[15]

Ibn ᶜUmar is also said to have commented on the *bayᶜa* given to the Prophet, suggesting (in an echo of Q 64.16) that a reservation was introduced into the obligation to obey, as though in acknowledgement of Humanity's fallibility:

> I heard Ibn ᶜUmar saying: When we pledged allegiance to the Messenger of God for hearing and obeying, he whispered to us, 'In what you are able' (*kunnā idhā bāyaᶜnā rasūl Allāh ᶜalā al-samᶜ wa'l-ṭāᶜa yulaqqinunā fīmā istaṭᶜata*).[16]

Like all such legal material, these last three traditions survive in books compiled in the late eighth and early-to-mid-ninth centuries and after, but probably took something resembling their current form before then. Because Ibn ᶜUmar (d. 693) features so frequently in the list of authorities for the *ḥadīth*s and is said to have been transmitted by ᶜAbd Allāh b. Dīnār (d. early-to-mid-eighth century),[17] a date of *c*. 700–30 seems the most plausible time for their having taken their extant form. Furthermore, because the concerns of all six traditions match the historical circumstances of the second *fitna*, it seems likely that they do reflect ideas circulating in the early Marwanid period and even ideas emerging out of the context of the second civil war itself. They respond to the problem of the limits of the obligation of obedience and the question of the extent to which the recognition of a leader determined membership of the saved community.

THE *BAYᶜA* IN KHARIJITE POETRY

Some of the earliest extant poetry concerning the oath of allegiance is by the *khawārij*, or 'Kharijites'. This name was given to rebel Kufan settlers who cast off allegiance to the fourth Muslim ruler, ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, in *c*. 657, as well as to other rebels against the authority of various subsequent seventh-century and eighth-century Muslim rulers. How far the 'Kharijites' were part of a coherent religio-political movement, or movements, is not entirely clear, but the different groups were usually characterised by a puritanical piety and a willingness to use force against the perceived corruption of religion by wordly rulers: they considered Muslims who obeyed the (to them) compromised and impious caliphs to be unbelievers, and so legitimate targets for jihad until they were killed, or repented and joined their Kharijite group.

The evidence of the Kharijite poems corroborates that of the earliest legal traditions in that it shows positions in the contest over legitimate authority within the Muslim 'conquest society' being expressed in a shared language of Arabian

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monotheism, of which the Qurʾān is the pre-eminent expression and in which the concept of the *bayᶜa*, the 'pledge of allegiance' or 'bargain with God', already had a prominent place.

In a reference to their jihad, the Kharijites sometimes called themselves *al-Shārūn*, or *al-Shurāt* – 'Sellers (of their souls in return for heaven)'.

> Verily, oh Sellers, the time has drawn near for a man to sell his life to God so that he sets out (*allā ayyuhā al-shārūn qad ḥāna li-imraʾ sharā nafsahu li'llāh an yataraḥḥalā*).
>
> You have remained in the house of those in error and pagan ignorance, and each man among you is hunted in order to be killed (*aqamtum bi-dār al-khāṭiʾīna jahālatan wa-kullu 'mrāʾ minkum yuṣādu li-yuqtalā*).[18]

The verses are attributed to the Kharijite leader Muᶜādh b. Juwayn, at the time of his imprisonment by al-Mughīra b. Shuᶜba, who was Muᶜāwiya's governor in Kufa between *c*. 661 and *c*. 671. Muᶜādh urges his followers to sell their souls to God in jihad against the deviant and pagan rule of Muᶜāwiya.

Another poem explicitly describes an agreement with God with the verb *bāyaᶜa*. It is attributed to a certain Maᶜdān b. Mālik al-Iyādī and derives either from the time of the first Kharijite rebellion against ᶜAlī in 37/658, or (perhaps more likely) from the second *fitna*, in *c*. 65/684–5:

> Peace to him who has made a bargain with God for selling (his soul) and no peace to the party that remains behind (*salām ᶜalā man bāyaᶜa Allāh shārīyan wa-laysa ᶜalā al-ḥizb al-muqīm salām*).[19]

Both poems echo the Qurʾān: the idea of selling one's soul in making a pledge to fight jihad resembles *sūrat Barāʾa* (Q 9.111). The opposition of those who have pledged to 'go out' to fight (*kharaja*, whence *khawārij*, or 'Kharijites'), as opposed to those who 'sit' (*qaᶜada*), is also found in the same *sūra* (Q 9.46, 83, 86); it also recalls the criticism of *al-mukhallafīn*, 'those left behind', in *sūrat al-Fatḥ* (Q 48.11, 15, 16), which also deals with the pledge of allegiance (Q 48.10, 18). Unusually, the Kharijites took the unbelievers against whom they were obliged to 'go out' (*kharaja*, *hajara*, *taraḥḥala*, *inṭalaqa*, etc.) to include those whom the majority considered to be Muslims. However, the responsibility to 'go out' to war was not itself an innovation; it is insisted upon in the Qurʾān repeatedly.[20] Emigration for jihad was a duty for all Muslims: unbelievers were to be fought until they converted or, if already monotheists of a sort (albeit misguided ones), such as Christians and Jews, to be fought until they recognised the *umma*'s authority by paying tax or tribute.[21] Belief in God, membership of His

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community and military service under His deputy are closely related in Kharijite poetry, as in the early strands of the Islamic legal tradition; what was contested was who constituted the community and whom they should follow into war.

POETRY AND THE IDEA OF THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE IN THE EARLY MARWANID PERIOD

In Umayyad poetry and speeches of the late seventh and early eighth centuries, we find the same nexus of ideas that occurs in the Kharijite poetry and the legal tradition deployed to assert Umayyad legitimacy. One of the earliest, most important and well-studied examples of Umayyad poetry is a panegyric for the second Marwanid caliph, ᶜAbd al-Malik, which was edited and translated by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych in 1997.[22] The poem is by al-Akhṭal ('the Loquacious', d. before 710), who, like his tribe, the Banū Taghlib, was a Christian. As with the poem of Miskīn for Muᶜāwiya, cited above, it seems likely that, although it is preserved only in the tenth-century *Kitāb al-Aghānī* ('The Book of Songs'), the poem itself has been transmitted quite accurately.[23] Most likely al-Akhṭal performed it in Syria in 691, just after ᶜAbd al-Malik's victory in Iraq over Muṣᶜab b. al-Zubayr, at the end of the second *fitna*, but before the final defeat, in the Ḥijāz, of Muṣᶜab's brother, the caliph ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, in 692 (both events fell in 72 H).[24] Its content supports this provenance: the poem's themes match the circumstances of 691 very precisely, with names and places corresponding with the historical tradition's account of events; furthermore, the ideology it expresses is distinctively Umayyad.

Al-Akhṭal's poem reflects the ongoing reinvention of the Arabian poetic tradition in the new context of the caliphate. As a whole, the poem functions first as a declaration of the loyalty of the Banū Taghlib and their poet, al-Akhṭal, to the Umayyads in general, and ᶜAbd al-Malik in particular, and, second, as an appeal to the caliph not to forget Taghlib and al-Akhṭal's right to his special favour following the reconciliation of rival tribes (and their poet) to the Umayyads. In the poem, the pledge of allegiance (*bayᶜa*) is a reciprocal agreement. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, it is also a pledge to 'God's deputy', loyalty to whom is equated with right belief and rebellion against whom thus makes one an infidel. Although nothing survives of the original context in which the poem was performed, it might be imagined that it would have been delivered at an audience of the Banū Taghlib with the caliph, as a public affirmation of their loyalty and ᶜAbd al-Malik's obligations to them.

The poem begins in a fashion conventional in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic *qaṣīda*, or 'ode', with seventeen lines evoking nostalgia at the departure of the tribe and lost love (*nasīb*), before moving to a twenty-seven-line panegyric (*madḥ*) of ᶜAbd al-Malik that begins:

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They alighted in the evening, and we turned aside our noble-bred camels: for the man in need, the time had come to journey

To a man whose gifts do not elude us, whom God has made victorious, so let him in his victory long delight!

He who wades into the deep of battle, auspicious his augury, the Caliph of God, through whom men pray for rain.

When his soul whispers its intention to him it sends him resolutely forth, His courage and caution like two keen blades.

In him the common weal resides, and after his assurance no peril can seduce him from his pledge (*wa'l-mustamirr bihi amr al-jamīᶜ fa-mā yaghtarruhu baᶜd tawkīd lahu gharar*).

Not even the Euphrates when its tributaries pour seething into it and sweep the giant wallow-wort from its two banks into the middle of its rushing stream,

And the summer winds churn it until its waves form agitated puddles on the prows of ships,

Racing in a vast and mighty torrent from the mountains of the Romans whose foothills divert its course,

Is ever more generous than he to the supplicant or more dazzling to the beholder's eye.[25]

The comparison of the power of the Euphrates in flood with the generous and victorious ruler alludes to al-Nābigha's panegyric of the Christian Naṣrid king al-Nuᶜmān b. Mundhir (r. *c*. 580–602), which was quoted in Chapter 1.[26] Thus, ᶜAbd al-Malik's power and authority are in the tradition of monotheist Arabian kingship – an allusion to which many among the tribes of Syria, Mesopotamia and Iraq would have been fully alert. The image of the ruler as divinely inspired rain-bringer is another ancient motif in the rhetoric of Near Eastern sacral kingship, where rain is symbolic of the blessings, both material and spiritual, that loyalty to the king brings about.[27] The title *khalīfat Allāh* – 'deputy, or caliph, of God' – which is connected to bringing rain here, is the same as that known to have been claimed by Muᶜāwiya and the Banū Umayya in the 670s and almost certainly has some earlier roots in Arabian–Muslim usage;[28] ᶜAbd al-Malik is 'God's representative on earth', through loyalty to whom God's blessings are obtained. The title also recalls the rhetoric of late antique East Roman imperial authority. In refusing to join a plot against the emperor Heraclius in *c*. 636–7, an Armenian noble is said to have commented: 'You call them vicars (i.e. 'deputies', Arm. *teṙapah*) of God; so it is not right to participate in that act.'[29] This is the Armenian analogue for the long-established Roman idea of the emperor as *vicarius Dei*, 'deputy, or representative, of God'.[30]

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The twin themes of generous reward in return for loyalty and humiliating punishment as the penalty for treachery are central to the poem: the victory that is being celebrated is against those 'who did not desist in treachery and cunning against you' (*lam yazal bika wāshīhim wa-makruhum*).[31] The argument of the panegyric is that al-Akhṭal's tribe are the caliph's most loyal subjects and thus most worthy of his patronage and protection: 'whoever witholds his counsel (*naṣīḥa*) from us and whose hand is niggardly to those beneath us / Will be the ransom of the Commander of the Faithful when a . . . battle-day bares its teeth.'[32] Because ᶜAbd al-Malik is God's deputy, the patronage and protection is also God's: to Quraysh, 'God allotted . . . good fortune that made them victorious' (*aᶜṭāhum Allāh jaddan yunṣarūna bihi*). A reciprocal understanding of vassalage is present: not only does God's deputy reward his loyal followers, but he is constant towards them: 'no peril can seduce' ᶜAbd al-Malik 'from his pledge (*tawkīd*)'.[33]

When al-Akhṭal refers to specific victories in the poem, he mentions those that secured Mesopotamia and Iraq for the Umayyads in 689–91. Hence, the rewards and punishments are those meted out to the participants in these battles, and the conceptual framework is that of the politics of tribal conflict in Syria in the 680s and 690s, where tribes identified themselves as belonging to one of two larger tribal groups, 'Yemen' or 'Qays'. The penultimate seventeen lines of the poem combine boasting of the loyalty to ᶜAbd al-Malik of al-Akhṭal and his 'Yemeni' tribe, Taghlib, with denigration of various rival 'Qaysī' tribal groups and individuals that had fought for ᶜAbd al-Malik's enemies: Zufar b. al-Ḥārith al-Kilābī and al-Ḥārith b. Abī ᶜAwf, both of the Banū ᶜĀmir b. Ṣaᶜṣaᶜa, and ᶜUmayr b. Ḥubāb al-Dhakwanī of the Banū Sulaym.

In 683 Zufar b. al-Ḥārith had pledged allegiance to ᶜAbd al-Malik's rival for the caliphate, Ibn al-Zubyar, and defended the fortified city of Qarqisīyā (Circesium, modern Busayra) in the Jazīra (Mesopotamia) against ᶜAbd al-Malik. However, in 691, Zufar secured a safe-conduct from ᶜAbd al-Malik in return for his neutrality (so as not to break his pledge of allegiance to Ibn al-Zubayr), payment, his son's participation in ᶜAbd al-Malik's campaign against Muṣᶜab b. al-Zubayr in Iraq and his daughter's marriage to one of ᶜAbd al-Malik's sons by a concubine.[34] ᶜUmayr b. Ḥubāb, leader of the Banū Sulaym, had initially pledged allegiance to ᶜAbd al-Malik after Marj Rāhiṭ in 684–5, but then went on to join Zufar b. al-Ḥārith, with whom he had launched a series of successful attacks against Taghlib and other Yemeni tribes prior to 689 (when Zufar b. al-Ḥārith and his followers abandoned ᶜUmayr at al-Ḥashshāk to face the Banū Taghlib in battle).[35] Al-Ḥārith b. Abī ᶜAwf is also said to have been one of the Banū ᶜĀmir b. Ṣaᶜṣaᶜa, but presumably did not flee to Qarqisīyā, since the poem describes his corpse on the battlefield.[36]

The offer of safe-conduct to Zufar is a pivotal point in the poem: after the panegyric of the caliph and the Umayyads, al-Akhṭal introduces the themes of tribal

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boasting and invective (*fakhr* and *hijāʾ*) by proclaiming his tribe's constancy (where 'sound advice' – *naṣīḥa* – is again an index of loyalty) and warning the Umayyads against allowing Zufar to 'dwell secure among you' (*fa-lā yabitanna fīkum aminan Zufar*), and then boasts of his own, loyal, tribe's role in defeating the Qaysī enemies of the caliph:

> Through us you were victorious, O Commander of the Faithful, when the news reached you in the interior of al-Ghūṭa
> They identified for you the head of Ibn Ḥubāb, its nose-bridge now marked by the sword . . .
> . . . His corpse now lies on the bank of al-Hashshāk River; his head on the far side of Mount al-Yaḥmūm and the land of al-Ṣiwar . . .
> And al-Ḥārith b. ᶜAwf there plucked plucked his flesh by turns the vultures and the hawks.
> (Thanks to us) the men of Qays ᶜAylān came forth hastening to pledge allegiance to you publicly after long denial.
> May God never lead Qays back from their error; and the Banū Dhakwān, may no-one say, 'Take care!' when they stumble . . .
> . . . They lived in blessed abundance till thy were caught in Satan's snares, and made false claims.
> They were mounted on a decrepit she-camel, her hard seat, bald, she had neither tail hair nor fur.[37]

As Pinckney Stetkevych has pointed out, these verses are 'of particular note': in them, loyalty to the Umayyads is identified completely with loyalty to God. Because of the Yemeni Taghlib, 'Qays ᶜAylān came forth hastening to render public homage to you after long denial' (*wa-Qays ᶜAylān ḥattā aqbalū raqaṣan fa-bāyaᶜūka jihāran baᶜd mā kafarū*). *Kafarū* ('they concealed', 'denied', 'were ungrateful', 'were in a state of unbelief') is opposed to *bāyaᶜū jihāran* ('they pledged allegiance publicly'), implying an equivalence between political bad faith and the condition of religious infidelity: belief in God is expressed through 'public allegiance' to His caliph.[38] The tribes of Qays lived in 'blessed abundance' (*kanū nawī imma*) until they were ensared by 'Satan': by implication, Ibn al-Zubayr is Satan's deputy in contrast to the Umayyad viceregents of God. The language echoes that of the Qurʾān, but it also draws upon the traditional invective of the Arabian tribes and the tropes of ancient Near Eastern kingship: loyalty to Ibn al-Zubayr is like riding a mangy and diseased camel.[39]

According to the poem, ᶜAbd al-Malik was at al-Ghūṭa, in the immediate hinterland of Damascus, when he was brought the head of Ibn Ḥubāb. Ibn Ḥubāb is said to have pledged allegiance to ᶜAbd al-Malik after Marj Rāhiṭ before violating

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his covenant by subsequently joining Zufar al-Ḥārith.[40] The other references to place names suggest that Ibn Ḥubāb's unburied body remained on the battlefield at al-Ḥashshāk, in the Jazīra (as did al-Ḥārith's), while his head was eventually displayed in Syria.[41] In this context, the descriptions of the corpses of Ibn Ḥubāb and al-Ḥārith perhaps become more than 'a traditional tribal victory gloat'.[42] The humiliation of defeat, unburied death, mutilation and decapitation is a consequence of disloyalty to God's covenant as represented by His true caliphs.[43]

The provincial pledge of allegiance in the early Umayyad period

In reading later accounts of the Umayyads' provincial governors taking pledges of loyalty from their garrisons, as well as others that refer to the governors' responses to disloyalty, it is possible to connect the pledge of loyalty to the caliph's provincial military commanders to the understanding of the pledge of allegiance found in the poetry and the *ḥadīth*. Conclusions based upon anecdotal material from the later (ninth- and tenth-century) tradition must be both tentative and incomplete. Nonetheless, later accounts of commanders' letters and speeches are interesting in that they echo the Umayyad poetry in their emphasis on the absolute authority of the caliphs and their representatives, but are a little different in their focus on the practical consequences of disobedience (*maʿṣiya*).

A letter that the Umayyad governor of Kufa, Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Khālid b. Asīd (r. *c*. 690/1–*c*. 692/3 or 693/4),[44] is said to have ordered to be read out to those from Kufa who had deserted (*irfaḍḍa*), explains that desertion is tantamount to disobedience of God and His caliphs:

> God has imposed the duty of jihad on His servants, and required obedience to those who govern them (*wulāt al-amr*) . . . He who defies (*ʿaṣā*) the governors and rightful authorities brings down God's wrath on himself, merits corporal punishment (*al-ʿuqūba fī basharihi*), and makes himself liable to confiscation of his property as public spoils (*istifāʾa mālihi*), cancellation of his stipend (*ilqāʾ ʿaṭāʾihi*), and exile to the furthest part of the earth and the evil places (*al-tasyīr ilā abʿad al-arḍ wa-shirr al-buldān*) . . . I swear by God (*uqsimu bi'llāh*) that I will not overcome someone in defiance of authority (*ʿāṣiyan*) after this letter of mine, but that I will kill him (*qataltuhu*), God willing. Peace be with you, and the mercy of God.[45]

In the insistence on jihad, the prohibition of desertion and the emphasis on obedience, Khālid's letter echoes the themes of the legal traditions and the poetry. What distinguishes his letter from the other sources are the penalties that Khālid lists:

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'corporal punishment . . . confiscation of property . . . cancellation of stipend . . . and exile'. Only his final threat of execution is reflected in the Umayyad poetry.

An escalation of the same rhetoric is found in the various versions of the speech attributed to al-Ḥajjāj on his arrival as governor in Iraq in 694–5:

> Faces scowl because God has coined 'a similitude: a village which was safe and secure, its sustenance coming to it from every side; but they were ungrateful for God's blessings, and God made them taste the garment of hunger and fear, because of what they had been doing' (Q 16.112). Obey your herdsman, and go straight, for, by God, I will make you taste abasement until you learn how . . . If their defiance were permitted to the people of defiance (*ahl al-maᶜṣiya*), no spoil would be collected, no enemy fought and the frontiers would be unmanned; and if they were not compelled to campaign against their will, they would not campaign voluntarily. Your desertion (*rafḍukum*) of al-Muhallab has reached me and your return to your garrison, in defiance and as rebels (*ᶜaṣātan mukhālifīn*). Truly I swear by God (*wa-innī uqsimu bi'llāh*) that I will not find one of you after three days, but that I will behead him![46]

The problem of the Iraqis' disloyalty on campaign is a priority for both governors. Deserters are threatened with a hierarchy of penalties: loss of property, loss of income, exile and death. Indeed, the accounts are not unlike those about the Marwanids' contemporary and rival, the Zubayrid governor of Iraq, Muṣᶜab b. al-Zubayr (r. 686–91). Faced with Marwanid loyalists in the province during the civil war in 690–1, Muṣᶜab rounded up the suspects and publicly abused them, had them beaten and shaved their beards, exposed them to the sun for three days, forced them to divorce their wives and swear not to remarry.[47] Others were killed and had their property destroyed or seized.[48]

Penalties that entail the loss of wives, property and income are particularly noteworthy because – to anticipate some of the conclusions of Part 3 – they resemble elements of the formula known as 'the oaths of *bayᶜa*' with which the written contracts for later, Abbasid oaths of allegiance tended to conclude. Indeed, centuries later, the same al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, to whom one of the two speeches is attributed, was credited with the establishment of 'the oaths of the *bayᶜa*'. As the Mamluk scribe al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418) put it:

> (ᶜAbd al-Malik) appointed al-Ḥajjāj to the government of Iraq, and the organisation of the taking of the oath of allegiance to ᶜAbd al-Malik in Iraq. He put together solemn oaths (*rattaba aymānan al-mughallaẓatan*) which included the oath by Almighty God (*al-ḥilf bi'llāh taᶜālā*), and divorce (*al-ṭalāq*), and misfortune (*al-ᶜanāq*) and the binding oaths by which the oath of allegiance is sworn (*wa'l-aymān al-muḥarrijāt yuḥlafu bi-hā ᶜalā al-bayᶜa*), and which are famous

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among the legal scholars as 'the oaths of the *bayᶜa*' (*aymān al-bayᶜa*), which continued uninterrupted under the Abbasid dynasty.[49]

Al-Ḥajjāj may have been responsible for the 'oaths of the *bayᶜa*' – certainly the early Marwanid period saw the beginnings of the systematisation of many aspects of government – but it seems likely that the oaths themselves were derived from existing custom: elsewhere, al-Qalqashandī explains that the pre-Islamic Arabs 'used to mention (with respect to) their oaths (*ḥilf*) in their poetry and prose the bringing of loathed things into relation to the one taking the oath: destruction of selves or property, corruption of (the perjurer's) circumstances'.[50] In fact, it seems likely that the Umayyad oaths claimed to be even weightier than that. In the early Islamic ideological context, the penalties also reflect the 'outsider' status accorded to those in rebellion against God's covenant: the confiscation of property as 'booty' or as 'public revenue' (*fayʾ*), and the negation of rights to women and, potentially, to life, were the key features of the Muslims' treatment of unbelievers who had been defeated in war and were outside treaty-obligations;[51] very similar penalties are found in Roman law and there also are parallels in Sasanian legal material.[52]

The accounts of the actions of Muṣᶜab, and of the speeches of Khālid and al-Ḥajjāj, suggest that the penalties for disobedience were linked to loss of rights and status as an Arabian–Muslim warrior: corporal humiliation and the loss of property and marriage rights are prominent in the accounts, as is the loss of the stipend. Other accounts of the Marwanid period tend to corroborate this impression that the oaths actually imposed by governors on the troops entailed specific practical consequences: oaths of divorce and the loss of slaves recur in many of the *akhbār*.[53] In these accounts there may be echoes of the *bayᶜa*'s roots in pre-Islamic Near Eastern practice, which emerges in a documentary, and 'fully-Islamised' (i.e. 'classical') form, in much later Abbasid texts. Violent rebellion and heresy (or 'political' opposition construed as 'heresy'), however, were often punished with the death penalty in both Umayyad and Abbasid times.[54]

CONCLUSIONS

The poetry, the legal tradition and the historical tradition present a consistent picture of the pledge of allegiance as a widely recognised cultural form among the late-seventh- and early eighth-century conquerors of the Roman and Sasanian Near East. The pledge was a public declaration of loyalty: 'Qays . . . pledge allegiance publicly' (*Qays . . . bāyaᶜū . . . jihāran*) to ᶜAbd al-Malik in al-Akhṭal's poem of 691. Nomads and former nomads were bound to obey their leader and not to 'desert', 'revert to nomadism' or 'apostatize' (*taᶜarraba*, *irtadda*, *irfaḍḍa*) in pledges for 'emigration' or 'settlement' (*hijra*). Those who violated this

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pledge were 'throwers-off' of allegiance (*khulaᶜāᵓ*), outside the protection (*jiwār*, *dhimma*) of a covenant and without claim to property and security and potentially liable to exile or execution.

This early eighth-century material anticipates the ideology of caliphal authority expressed by the court poets of the next generation of Umayyad rulers. In the first years of the caliphate of Hishām b.ᶜAbd al-Malik (r. 724–43), al-Farazdaq (d. 728 or 730) is said to have performed the following verses.

I have seen the sons of Marwān raise up their rule; young kings (but) like lions and old white haired ones.
Through them God has united the prayer (*bihim jamaᶜa Allāh al-ṣalwa*), and its people have united after disunity (*qad ijtamaᶜat baᶜd ikhtilāf shuᶜūbuhā*).
Those who have inherited both wooden objects (*ᶜūdayn*)[55] and the seal-ring (*al-khātam*) are those who possess authority and limitless earth and its vastness
They possess the rope/covenant (*ḥabl*),[56] with which they have drawn up the wooden cross-piece of the leather bucket (*ᶜarāqiy dalw*), which had poured out its plentiful contents
Upon the earth. (When) those among their kings shake it (to fill it), its ancient well pours out favour (*ᶜafw*),[57] like the dark Euphrates.[58]

It is one of the most succinct poetic statements of the symbolism of Marwanid legitimacy. The Marwanids' possession of the staff, minbar and seal indicates their authority and symbolises their status as the representative of God's covenant, after Muḥammad and earlier, biblical and quranic prophets. Through them, God unites (*jamaᶜa*) the true monotheists – the Marwanids possess the well-rope, or covenant, by which the earth is revived. The pre-Islamic and quranic resonances of rope (*ḥabl*) as a symbol of the 'covenant' show that the caliph is the representative of God's covenant on earth (*al-arḍ*), through whom God's blessings and mercy (*ᶜafw*) reach the Muslims,[59] characterised, in the tradition of Near Eastern monarchy, as the inundating waters of the Euphrates.

The theme of violation of the covenant, already present in al-Akhṭal's representation of the deaths of Ibn Hubāb and al-Ḥārith in *c*. 691, is also expressed much more emphatically in slightly later poetry. Jarīr (d. *c*. 728–9) performed a panegyric for the Marwanid governor of Iraq al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (r. 694–714):

Who obstructs the increase of hypocrisy over them, or who governs like the governing of al-Ḥajjāj?
Or who jealously protects women, defending them when they cannot rely upon the jealous protection of (their) husbands?

. . . . .

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He prevents bribery, shows you the ways of righteousness and averts the robber from night-journeys (*al-adlāj*).
Lead the flock and show the ways of righteousness (*subul al-hudā*)! Summon the confidante, but not when they exchange confidences about you.
Many a violator of the two oaths of allegiance (*nākith bayᶜatayn*) have you left, with the dye of his beard the blood of the jugular veins.[60]

In one tradition this poem is linked to the execution of a specific rebel, who was said to have pledged allegiance to ᶜAbd al-Malik twice before violating both oaths,[61] but this is most likely an exegetical fiction that explains the unusual *bayᶜatayn*, 'two pledges of allegiance' (albeit a plausible one).[62] However, the arrogation of the right to execute rebels who have broken their oaths is clear, as is the association between *subul al-hudā* ('the ways of the way of righteousness', 'the paths of true religion') and Umayyad authority.[63]

Although God's covenant was the basis for all pacts and agreements between monotheists, how God's authority was expressed on earth remained open to widely differing interpretations. All the surviving evidence indicates that the early Marwanid caliphs tended to promote a maximalist view of their authority, in which the *khalīfat Allāh* was literally 'God's caliph' in the sense of His deputy on earth.[64] They arrogated as much power to themselves as political realities would allow (and the haranguing tone of their speeches suggests a significant gap between their claims and political realities). In this they perpetuated a strand of thought already present in the first decades of the caliphate;[65] like Muḥammad, they asserted a coincidence between God's covenant and the covenant with the leader of His polity. It is also probable that their monarchic and autocratic expression of divinely inspired rule gained further impetus from absolutist elements of sixth- and seventh-century Roman and Iranian political theory, to which they were exposed in an unmediated form in the conquered provinces. A measure of Umayyad success is that, although their Abbasid usurpers reinvented much of the symbolism, many of the elements of Umayyad rituals of succession and accession were adopted and developed after the Abbasid Revolution of 750, not least the institution of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd*, by which authority was transferred from one generation of rulers to the next.

NOTES

1. On this, see Crone, 'First century'; cf. Donner, *Narratives*, 40ff.
2. Kister, 'Land property and *jihād*', 279; Bosworth, '*Taᶜarrub*', 359; Crone, 'First century', 356.
3. al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muᶜjam*, ii, §2074; Kister, 'Land property and *jihād*', 279; Crone, 'First century', 356.
4. AB, s.v.; *EI*^{2}, s.v.'Fitna' (L. Gardet).

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5. Crone, 'First century', 356, 382. Cf. Athamina, '*Aʿrāb* and *Muhājirūn*'.
6. al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 373, bk 92.14; Bosworth, '*Taʿarrub*', 358–9.
7. al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 373, bk 92.14; Bosworth, '*Taʿarrub*', 359; Crone, 'First century', 356.
8. Waq., ii, 757; IS, i, 291, iv, 343–4.
9. e.g. Q 47.25.
10. Cf. Landau-Tasseron, 'Tribal society', 205ff.
11. Cf. Watt, *Medina*, 85–6, and Donner, *Conquests*, 79–80, who both accept the later tradition's interpretation.
12. Ṭab., ii, 305, 733–5., 749–50, 766ff.; Wellhausen, *Religio-Political Factions*, 135; *EI*^{2}, s.v.'Ṣuʿlūk' (A. Arazi).
13. Cf. Din., 312, where ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr threatens: 'Either you both pledge allegiance to me or go out from my protection' (*immā tubāyiʿānī aw takhrujā min jiwārī*).
14. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vii, §5088, cf. vii, §5192, §5378, §5457, viii, §5709.
15. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, viii, §5676. Cf. vii, §5378.
16. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, viii, §5771, cf. viii, §5541; Mālik, *Muwaṭṭāʾ*, bk 55.1.1, 3.
17. On whom, see al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, v, 203, §350.
18. ʿAbbās, *Shiʿr al-Khawārij*, 8–9, no. 11, ll. 1–2; cf. Nöldeke and Müller, *Delectus*, 88–9; Wellhausen, *Religio-Political Factions*, 23, n. 7.
19. ʿAbbās, *Shiʿr al-Khawārij*, 9, no. 12, l. 1; cf. *EI*^{2}, s.v.'Ṣufriyya' (W. Madelung).
20. Crone and Zimmermann, *Epistle*, 275; Crone, *Political Thought*, 54.
21. Crone, *Political Thought*, 368ff.
22. Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric'.
23. See above, pp. 92–4, and Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 96.
24. Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 92 (for the date); cf. Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, 82ff.
25. Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 100, 103, 119–20, ll. 17–22, 25 (with minor changes).
26. See above, pp. 33–4; Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 107.
27. Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 123, 157.
28. See above, Ch. 4, n. 14.
29. Sebeos, *Armenian History*, 93 and n. 576.
30. Cf. Dvornik, *Political Philosophy*, ii, 627, 630. See further ibid., ii, 616ff., 780ff., and above, pp. 5–7.
31. Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 104, 120, l. 26.
32. Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 104, 120, ll. 27–8.
33. Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 92, 95–7.
34. Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 59, 89ff., 131; Crone, *Slaves*, 108; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ḳarḳīsiyā (also Ḳarḳīsiya)' (M. Streck).
35. Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 89ff.; Crone, *Slaves*, 107–8; Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 111, 113.
36. Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 111, n.58.
37. Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 111–12, 120–1, ll. 51–2, 54, 56–8, 60–1 (with minor changes).
38. Pinckney Stetkevych, 'Umayyad panegyric', 113–14.
39. e.g. Humbach and Skjærvø, *Sassanian Inscription*, iii.1, §58; Crone, 'Qays and Yemen', 27.

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40. See above, n. 35.
41. Abū Tammām, *Naqāʾid*, 126, n. ‘a’.
42. Pinckney Stetkevych, ‘Umayyad panegyric’, 113.
43. Kraemer, ‘Apostates, rebels and brigands’; Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, esp. 47ff.; Marsham, ‘“Those Who Make War . . . ”’.
44. Ṭab., ii, 818, 853, 855; Crone, *Slaves*, n. 289; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxii, 3, nn. 12, 13.
45. Ṭab., ii, 858; tr. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxii, 6 (E. K. Rowson), with minor changes. For the desertion, see Ṭab., ii, 857.
46. Ṭab., ii, 865, ll. 12–16, 866, ll. 3–6; tr. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxii, 15–16 (E. K. Rowson), with minor changes.
47. Ṭab., ii, 801–3.
48. Ṭab., ii, 803.
49. Qal., ix, 280. Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, i, 376–7; Marsham and Robinson, ‘Safe-conduct’, 270, n. 148.
50. Qal., xiii, 204.
51. Cf. Crone and Zimmermann, *Epistle*, 90–1 (ii, §57), 158; al-Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, 44f.
52. Cloud, ‘Constitution’, 496; Perikhanian, *Book of a Thousand Judgements*, 75.
53. e.g. Ṭab., ii, 1352, 1481–2, 1568–9; al-Awtabī, *Early Islamic Family*, 72.
54. See above, n. 43.
55. The insignia of a *khaṭīb*, or tribal spokesman, and emblems associated with oath-taking: *EI*^{2}, s.v. ‘Khaṭīb’ (J. Pedersen), perhaps ‘the staff and the *minbar*’, cf. Far., ii, 451, n. 2, and below, p. 141. Alternatively, perhaps, two staffs, or the staff and the *ḥarba* (short spear), either of the Prophet, or of religio-political authority more generally: IS, i, 250, 377; Gen. 49.10; Ps. 23.4; Benveniste, *Indo-European Language*, 324.
56. See above, pp. 26, 30; and below, pp. 173–4.
57. Or ‘mercy’.
58. Far., i, 154.
59. See also Marwanid prose, e.g., ᶜAbbās, *ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 212–13, 273, 300.
60. Jarīr, *Dīwān*, 90.
61. Ṭab., ii, 1265.
62. Jarīr, *Dīwān*, 90, n. 5.
63. Cf. Ṭab., ii, 1714.
64. Watt, ‘God’s caliph’; Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*.
65. Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, 1–23.

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CHAPTER

6

THE MARWANID PATRIMONY AND DYNASTIC SUCCESSION

The Marwanids followed Muᶜāwiya and his sons in securing recognition of the caliph's successor by taking the pledge of allegiance to that successor, while the incumbent himself was still living. In Marwanid times, two successors were usually so recognised, in a stipulated order. The Muslims, or their representatives, swore allegiance (*bāyaᶜa*) to the nominated successors, and this effected the change in their status; they became the *walī al-ᶜahd*s ('two successors to, or possessors of, the covenant'). Thus, the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* ('succession to, or possession of, the covenant') was an adaptation of existing Arabian (and now Islamic) custom in which leadership was recognised by a pledge of allegiance.

As one would expect, there are clear parallels with Sasanian and Roman succession practices and also with South Arabian, and perhaps Aksumite Ethiopian ones; Near Eastern monarchy was replicated through dynastic succession, approved by God and ratified by acclamation.[1] There are also more specific parallels that suggest the influence of Rome and perhaps Ḥimyar: as in the Christian Roman Empire, the ritual of succession is reminiscent of the representation of kingship in the Hebrew Bible, in which the king was chosen by God but also acclaimed by His people, and Umayyad rhetoric invoked the same biblical precedents to justify this.[2] The importance of Romano-Syrian provincials as advisers to the Sufyanid and Marwanid caliphs, and Umayyad reliance on the former Roman Syrian–Arab allies, as well as upon emigrant troops drawn from the federation of Ḥimyar, suggest the channels of cultural transmission that may have influenced their administration.[3]

That said, Judaeo-Christian culture had already contributed to the formation of the Ḥijāzī monotheism which found its expression in the Qurʾān. The political customs and structures of Iran, Rome and Ḥimyar would have been familiar

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to their conquerors and were largely compatible with their existing traditions, aspects of which may be identifiable in the unusual features of Arabian–Islamic succession. For all that Roman and Ḥimyarite practice may have influenced the Umayyads, the rituals of Umayyad succession also reveal the extent to which the customs of Muḥammad's Ḥijāz and of the 'conquest society' he had inspired shaped much of Umayyad political practice. The 'caliph' was not a 'king' and thus did not crown or anoint his heir, but nominated him as a 'possessor of the covenant' (*walī al-ᶜahd*), ratified or affirmed by the handclasps of the Muslims' pledges of allegiance.

God's Covenant and the Covenant of the Muslims

One of the earliest securely datable instances of the term *walī al-ᶜahd* ('successor to, or possessor of, the covenant') occurs in verses by the Tamīmī poet Jarīr, which promote the claims to the succession of ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. al-Walīd, the son of the second Marwanid caliph, al-Walīd I (r. 705–15), in *c*. 96/715.

> To ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz are raised the eyes of the flock, when the shepherds made their choice (*in takhayyarat al-riᶜāᵓ*);
> His merits call attention to him, when the state's tent pole (*ᶜimād al-mulk*) and the heavens fall.
> The possessors of authority (*ulū al-ḥukūma*) from Quraysh said, 'The pledge is incumbent upon us (*ᶜalaynā al-bayᶜ*) when the race is run,'
> And they considered ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz to be the successor to (the) covenant (*raᵓaw ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz walī ᶜahd*);[4] they have not acted wrongfully in that, nor done evil.
> [What are you waiting for, when among you is the courageous one of great deeds and growing dignity?][5]
> Let it slide (*fa-zahlifhā*) in its entirity to him, Commander of the Faithful, if you so wish.
> For the people have already stretched out their hands (*qad maddū ilayhi akuffahum*) and the veil has gone.
> And if they were to make the pledge of allegiance to you as successor to (the) covenant (*wa-law qad bāyaᶜū walī ᶜahd*), then justice would be established and the building would be in balance.[6]

Walī and *wilāya* are ambiguous, in much the same way as *khalīfa* and *khilāfa*. The *khalīfa* can be either God's 'deputy', or the 'successor' to the previous caliph; the *walī al-ᶜahd* can be the 'successor to', or the 'possessor of', God's covenant, the covenant of the previous caliph, or the covenant of the Muslims.[7] The *ᶜahd*

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was in some sense the *ᶜahd Allāh* – God's eternal covenant with humanity, represented on earth by the caliph and his successor. But how God's covenant was expressed remained open to question: was it simply through the will of the caliph, or through the collective will of the Muslims? Much later Sunni commentators would make it plain that they considered the caliph's covenant for the succession to be binding. This was usually justified with reference to Abū Bakr's nomination of ᶜUmar in 634, which was said to have been made by written covenant (*ᶜahd*), in a retrospective attempt to make constitutional and legal sense of the messy realities of more than 400 years of caliphal succession.[8]

The expression *walī ᶜahd fulān* ('the successor to the covenant of so-and-so'), which is found throughout the historical tradition, testifies to the importance of designation by the caliph.[9] An analogy with the posts of governors, commanders and other officials is sometimes made in Abbasid texts, where the caliph could nominate whoever he wished by a 'covenant' (*ᶜahd*).[10] As we have seen, the Umayyad caliphs claimed a maximalist interpretation of God's caliphate: they were God's representatives on earth, through allegiance to whom salvation was achieved and on behalf of Whom they ruled. As such, they could nominate whomever they wished as their successor. These claims could be justified in monotheist, 'Islamic' terms through the idea that the caliphs had inherited the political and legal authority of Muḥammad, but not his prophetic status: they were the representatives of 'God's covenant'. Furthermore, their clan's success was itself proof of God's favour.[11]

However, these claims to absolute caliphal authority over the succession were in tension with well-established ideas of reciprocity and consultation. Consultation and election were features of all Near Eastern kingship and were absolutely central to the more egalitarian political structures of the Arabian tribes from whom the vast majority of Muslims were drawn. For all that the Umayyad caliphs claimed absolute authority by divine right, they were obliged in practice to seek the assent of their immediate kin-group and allies. Furthermore monotheist justifications for hostility to autocratic, 'royal' power were widely available in the Bible and Qurʾān. A concession to these strands of thought can be seen in the Umayyads' recognition of the importance of the consultative and elective process (*shūrā*) that had made ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAffān (r. 644–56) caliph and that had transcended tribal and kin divisions. Thus, the caliphate might also be held to derive from a 'covenant' with the Muslims whom he led and who had chosen him. The *walī al-ᶜahd* might be not simply the possessor of the caliph's covenant, but also the possessor of the covenant of his Muslim electors.

The strength of the notion that the covenant was not merely that of the reigning caliph is suggested by the expression *walī ᶜahd al-muslimīn* ('successor to the covenant of the Muslims'), which occurs in a copy of a Marwanid document

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from the mid-740s;[12] the formula *walī ᶜahd al-muslimīn wa'l-muslimāt* ('successor to the covenant of the Muslim men and women') may also survive in a very damaged inscription inside an Umayyad palace, which probably dates from the mid-730s or early 740s.[13] These phrases might be taken merely to indicate that a covenant had been made with the Muslims when they pledged allegiance to the successor already designated by the caliph, or that the *walī al-ᶜahd* was successor to the office of representing the Muslim community's covenant with God. Jarīr's panegyric emphasises the absolute authority of the Marwanids, to whom the Muslims have 'streched out their hands' in a gesture of supplication and obedience; the rulers 'choose' (*takhayyarat*); the poet defers to caliphal authority with 'if you so wish' (*idhā tashāᵓu*). However, Marwanid claims to patrimonial autocracy were made in a context of ideas of consultative and elective authority; God's will could also be expressed through His community. This is clear in the slogans of many of the political opponents of the Umayyads, who called for 'consultation' (*shūrā*) to decide who should possess the caliphate.[14]

Thanks to the survival of copies of some of the public documents produced in the 740s for the last Umayyad caliphs, it is clear that, by then at least, the Umayyads maintained that God's omnipotence meant that He chose the successor to His covenant, but expressed His will through His deputy, the Umayyad caliph. Divine will was then recognised by the willing obedience of the Muslims, manifested in the pledges given to the caliph's nominee at the *bayᶜa* to him as *walī al-ᶜahd*. This idea is expressed in a letter written to the caliph's son by the scribe ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd (d. *c*. 750) on behalf of Marwān II (r. 744–50):

> There is no rank that someone desirous of the favour of possession of God's covenant in His land hopes for beyond possession of the Muslims' covenant (*fa-innahu laysa waraᵓa wilāyat ᶜahd al-muslimīn manzilat yarjūhā ṭāmiᶜ fī faḍl wilāyat ᶜahd Allāh fī bilādihi*).[15]

'Possession of the Muslims' covenant' (*wilāyat ᶜahd al-muslimīn*) is connected to 'possession of God's covenant' (*wilāyat ᶜahd Allāh*), but there is still a sense that God's choice is reserved to Him – there is no necessary connection between the will of God and that of the Muslims.

In another late Umayyad text (*c*. 746), the emphasis on God's will as the basis for the caliph's choice of his successor is also made plain:

> [The Commander of the Faithful offers you advice] even though you are, thanks be to God, of God's religion and his caliphate, in as much that God chose you for possession of the covenant (*bi-ḥaythu iṣṭanᶜaka Allāh li-wilāyat al-ᶜahd*), designating you for this, from among your relatives and the sons of your father.

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> If [Almighty][16] God had not commanded it, indicating it (to be right) [and wise people commanded it] – that is, offering advice, and preaching to the people of knowledge, even if they were the first in rank in [excellence] and especially in understanding – the Commander of the Faithful would have relied, regarding you, upon God's choice of you [and His giving preference to you] for what he perceives you worthy regarding the position from the Commander of the Faithful, and your precedence in desired things of his character, your taking of his praise-worthy characteristics and your taking as your own imitation of his conduct.[17]

The same idea is expressed in a letter written for al-Walīd II on the occasion of the nomination of his sons as his heirs in 743:

> Then God – to Him is praise and [from Him come] favour and bounty – guided the community to the best of outcomes for it . . . after His caliphate, which He has made a system of order for them and a mainstay for their affairs – namely the covenant (of succession) which God has inspired His caliphs to make firm . . .[18]

Because far fewer copies of authentic documents from the first eighty years of the Umayyad caliphate survive, it is not certain whether the early Umayyads (or their advisers) had worked out the theoretical basis of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* so carefully. However, poems like that of Jarīr for ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz do suggest that the succession was understood in similar terms from at least the beginning of the eighth century.

PATRIMONY AND DYNASTY IN THE MARWANID CALIPHATE

In the early Marwanid period the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* became the institution through which the caliphate was perpetuated as an office of imperial government. As with many such administrative innovations, the turning-point came in the latter part of ᶜAbd al-Malik's reign (r. 685–705). The precise pattern that the system of succession took was a function of the inheritance of Arabian patrimonial custom in a new, monotheist imperial context. Most Arabian–Muslims, including the Umayyads, had agnatic political structures, in which claims to leadership were diffused within a kin-group within which many could lay claim to *siyāda*. At the same time, that the caliphate should remain a united entity, ruled by one man, was widely accepted among the Arabian–Muslims. Marwanid succession sought to resolve, or at least contain, these tensions.

In the Sufyanid period, as we have seen, agnatic descent was defined quite widely – both the Banū Ḥarb and the Banū al-ᶜĀṣ had strong claims to *siyāda* and to caliphal office.[19] In some accounts, Marwān b. al-Ḥakam is said to have been proclaimed caliph by the Umayyad family in 64/683–4 on the agreement

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that he would be succeeded by Khālid b. Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya and ᶜAmr b. Saᶜīd b. al-ᶜĀṣ. He is said to have revised this agreement in 65/684–5, nominating his sons, ᶜAbd al-Malik and ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz, to succeed him, with the support of the influential leader of Kalb, Ḥassān b. Mālik b. Bahdal.[20] First Marwān b. al-Ḥakam and then his son successfully narrowed the field: Muᶜāwiya's great-grandson, Khālid b. Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya, was outmanœuvred politically;[21] according to many accounts, ᶜAbd al-Malik himself killed his main Umayyad rival, ᶜAmr b. Saᶜīd b. al-ᶜĀṣ, in 70/689–90 in order to secure the caliphate for his own branch of the tribe;[22] he was relieved of the problem of his own brother, ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. Marwān, who is said to have been nominated to succeed him, by ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz's timely death sometime between 702 and 704.[23]

Descent from ᶜAbd al-Malik then became a very significant claim to the succession, although other branches of the Umayyad family were still influential (see fig. 1).[24] In 85/704 ᶜAbd al-Malik is said to have formally nominated two of his sons to succeed him, al-Walīd (r. 705–15) and Sulaymān (r. 715–17), but some traditions state that he had also bound them to pass the caliphate on to two more of their brothers by noble Arabian mothers, Yazīd (r. 720–4) and either Marwān (who predeceased Sulaymān) or Hishām (r. 724–43).[25] Predictably, ᶜAbd al-Malik was succeeded by the four sons named in this tradition and by two grandsons, al-Walīd b. Yazīd (r. 743–4) and Yazīd b. al-Walīd (r. 744). The other descendants of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam were marginalised but by no means excluded: on the death of Sulaymān in 717, the Umayyad family chose ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. Marwān (r. 717–20) as the caliph (perhaps as a compromise candidate);[26] descent from Marwān still counted in the civil war of 744, in which his grandson Marwān (II) b. Muḥammad b. Marwān seized power after a bloody conflict within ᶜAbd al-Malik's descent group. However, Marwān II took power in the name of ᶜAbd al-Malik's family, claiming vengeance for his murdered second cousin, al-Walīd b. Yazīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik (drawing parallels with Muᶜāwiya's vengeance for ᶜUthmān).[27] The claims made in 743 for ᶜAbd al-Malik's great-grandson ᶜĀṭiq b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. al-Walīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik are further evidence of the force of this particular paternal descent line.[28]

This pattern is a function of the successful appropriation by ᶜAbd al-Malik and his progeny (by the women of powerful allies) of the material resources by which the loyalty of the Syrian army was secured, reinforced by cultural expectations about the agnatic patrimony. The absence of a tradition of primogeniture led to a tendency to divide the benefits of the succession within the patrimony, but such was the power and prestige of the sons of ᶜAbd al-Malik that they successfully maintained the unity of their followers, although tension over the succession was manifest at each succession and disintegrated in the next generation.[29] After his accession, Hishām (r. 724–43) worked to gain support for his son Maslama

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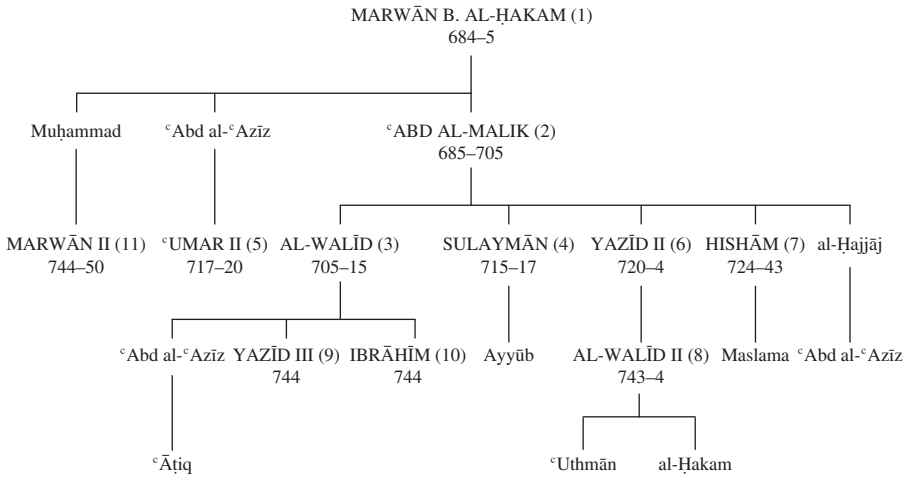


Fig. 1 Genealogical table of the Marwanid caliphs (caliphs appear in capitals with their regnal years; the numbers in parentheses indicate the sequence of their reigns).

b. Hishām as a replacement for al-Walīd b. Yazīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik, but failed, and al-Walīd II took power in 743.[30] Al-Walīd II attempted to establish his own dynasty, by taking the *bayᶜa* to his own sons,[31] an act that brought about the internecine third civil war (744–8) and established the conditions for the success of the Abbasid Revolution of 747–50.[32]

The mechanism for agreeing the succession was the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* – pledged agreement among the ruling elite of the Umayyad dynasty and their leading allies. After ᶜAbd al-Malik, every incumbent caliph who nominated successors specified two, in a predetermined sequence – the one already designated to succeed him by his own predecessor and his own nominee (or two new nominees if he himself was the second successor or if his own second successor had predeceased him). Even when consensus collapsed, the customs associated with the succession still mattered – two of the three civil-war Marwānid caliphs are said to have nominated heirs.[33] Accounts even circulated about Marwān b. Muḥammad (r. 744–50) having been made *walī al-ᶜahd* by al-Walīd II's sons, whom al-Walīd II had nominated as his heirs, but who had been killed by Yazīd III shortly after he had killed their father.[34]

FACTIONALISM AND THE SUCCESSION

This pattern of managed conflict between agnates in each generation, with the potential for instability inherent in such a system, is characteristic of societies,

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like that of late antique Arabia, in which kingship is hereditary but that lack a concept of primogeniture. In the Marwanid patrimony (as in Rome, Iran and, in all probability, Ḥimyar, Ghassān and Lakhm), succession tended to become the focus of competition within the dynasty and within the dynasty's supporters, and could both be used to buy the support of potential rivals and be used by factions in the elite to seek power. Offering a place in the succession alongside the caliph's son to a second, cognatic relative could help to secure the son's position, or might be the unavoidable *quid pro quo* emerging from an earlier favour: Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 720–4) recognised his brother Hishām's claim to the caliphate in order to secure the succession for his own, much younger, son, al-Walīd b. Yazīd;[35] ʿAmr b. Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ is said to have pressed claims to the caliphate based on the assistance given by him and his father to the Marwanids and Sufyanids, respectively;[36] Yazīd III is said to have made ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-Ḥajjāj b. ʿAbd al-Malik *walī al-ʿahd* after his brother, Ibrāhīm b. al-Walīd, in return for his assistance against al-Walīd II.[37]

Factions drawn from the wider ruling elite coalesced around claimants to the succession, either before they were nominated, or as they sought to make good their claim. As with the Sufyanids, a prospective *walī al-ʿahd* derived support from his mother's siblings, who hoped that he would replace his father's predecessor's nominee (usually a paternal uncle of their candidate);[38] if he was successful, they would gain from their proximity to the caliph and would continue to form the core of his support. Many of the Marwanids who became caliphs, or who were contenders for the post, were the progeny of unions between a caliph and a female member of the Umayyad dynasty.[39] The Marwanid caliphs also sometimes married women from other branches of the Umayyad family in order to produce heirs whose Umayyad mother's families had a stake in their sons' succession: for example, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-Walīd's mother, Umm al-Banīn b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān, supported his nomination as *walī al-ʿahd*.[40] Other marriages were used to tie other branches of the Umayyad family into the succession.[41] In other cases, marriage would cement alliances with the major tribes that served in the army and government. Prior to 744, all the caliphs who did not have two Umayyad parents were sons of high-status Arab women from these allies of the dynasty.[42] The importance of such alliances is reflected in the tendency to name the offspring after their mother's father, from whom they were also held to derive noble status (*sharaf*).[43] Only after 743, when factional support within the armies became more important than tribal solidarity, did this pattern of the succession of sons by Arabian wives break down.[44]

Paternal half-brothers by concubines were also important allies for potential successors. The half-brother's status depended exclusively upon their paternal link to the ruling family and so they were likely to be loyal supporters of their paternal half-brothers' caliphal claims. They tended to be promoted to

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governorships and frontier commands, which gave them significant economic and military power. The pattern can be seen in Maslama's support for his nephew via his half-brother, the reigning caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik. The nephew was – tellingly – named Maslama b. Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik.[45] (The unity of interest of agnates and maternal uncles can also be seen in the same conflict: Hishām b. Ismāʿīl al-Makhzūmī supported Maslama b. Hishām, his great-nephew.[46]) Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik's death in the early 120s/late 730s–early 740s is said to have been a terrible blow to Hishām, as indeed it was, removing a key supporter of his plan to install his son as successor.[47]

Beyond these disputes within the Umayyad family itself, succession politics contributed to the escalation of factional competition within the tribal groups of which the armies were composed. As we have seen, the Qaysī minority that occupied the northern frontiers of Syria resented Muʿāwiya and Yazīd's tendency to favour the federation of Quḍāʿa, and eventually backed Ibn al-Zubayr against the Umayyads in the second *fitna*.[48] In the period after their victory over the Qaysī supporters of the Zubayrids at Marj Rāhiṭ in 684, Quḍāʿa began to trace their ancestry from the South Arabian Qaḥṭān, as opposed to the North Arabian Maʿadd, making their shared genealogy with Qays much more remote and aligning themselves with the 'southern' Kinda, who had also fought for Marwān b. al-Ḥakam (as well as with Ḥimyar, who had not).[49] Subsequent competition between tribes for positions in the government and the army tended to be expressed as conflicts between Qays and Qaḥṭān in Syria, or Qays and Yemen in Iraq (where the tribes from eastern Arabia, such as the Banū Azd, were often held to be part of the 'southern', and hence 'Yemeni', descent-group).[50] In the provinces, where the Marwanids appointed governors from the tribes, the governors owed personal loyalty to the caliph who had appointed them, and often feared the possibility that a new ruler might remove them. Thus, provincial emirs often supported 'their' caliph's nominees for the succession, and this tended to draw factions within the predominantly tribal armies into succession politics.

Tensions escalated in the early 710s, when al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik threatened to depose his brother Sulaymān from the *wilāyat al-ʿahd* in favour of his own son, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's support derived from his mother's family – she was a daughter of his great-uncle ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān – and from the Qaysī tribal leader al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, who had been reappointed as governor of Iraq by al-Walīd and thus had an interest in the succession of his patron's son. When al-Ḥajjāj removed the Azdī (that is, 'eastern' and notionally 'southern', or 'Yemeni') tribal leader Yazīd b. al-Muhallab from the sub-governorship of Khurasan and replaced him with the Qaysī Qutayba b. Muslim, the ousted emir, Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, sought sanctuary with Sulaymān, the *walī al-ʿahd* who was facing deposition. Sulaymān and Yazīd found themselves in near-exile at

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Sulaymān's estate at al-Ramla, near Jerusalem, with Yazīd's security (*amān*) guaranteed by Sulaymān. Al-Ḥajjāj was saved from the failure of his intrigues only by his own timely death on the eve of the accession of Sulaymān; his sub-governor Qutayba, who was still alive, is said to have revolted against Sulaymān and been killed by some of his Yemeni troops. Sulaymān, predictably, appointed Yazīd b. al-Muhallab as his governor in Iraq.[51] Yazīd in turn backed Sulaymān's appointee for the caliphate, Ayyūb b. Sulaymān; Ayyūb's death and the subsequent accession of ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz led directly to Yazīd b. al-Muhallab's imprisonment, perhaps as a hostage to guarantee the loyalty of the Muhallabids to ᶜUmar II.[52]

The destructive combination of inter-Umayyad conflict for the caliphate and tribal factionalism was the undoing of the Marwanid caliphate: in 743 Qays-Yemen rivalry became 'a metropolitan phenomenon' after al-Walīd b. Yazīd had taken power with predominantly Qaysī support, provoking a Yemeni coup, which installed Yazīd b. al-Walīd and in turn provoked a Qaysī war of vengeance led by Marwan b. Muḥammad.[53] Once the Qays–Yemen divide in the provincial government coincided with conflict over succession to the caliphate, the fragile consensus within the Marwanid family and their supporters disintegrated.

POETRY AND PERSUASION AT THE MARWANID COURT

As a result of the very high stakes that rearranging the succession entailed, although most Marwanids attempted to alter it, none succeeded in modifying his precursor's wishes. Try they did, however. They sought to influence opinion at the caliphal court, among the Syrian tribesmen and in the provinces, deploying the resources of the empire to persuade. Where efforts were made either to establish or to change succession arrangements, the means of seeking or consolidating support for the *walī al-ᶜahd* at court were similar to those deployed by Muᶜāwiya when he sought to bolster the position of Yazīd. Opinion among the caliph's immediate entourage was tested, prompted and (perhaps most often) publicly affirmed through court ceremonial, in which panegyric poetry played an important role.[54] Three examples of this poetry illustrate how the panegyric poets addressed the specific question of the succession through the idioms of monotheist monarchy.

In a poem delivered to ᶜAbd al-Malik by a member of a delegation from al-Ḥajjāj's Iraq, al-Walīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik is praised in conventional terms as a monarch who brings rain to the people, and around whose domed royal tent they gather.[55] But the poem also has specific features that express the consensus at ᶜAbd al-Malik's court (or, perhaps, that remind potential naysayers of the powerful governor of Iraq's support for the succession of al-Walīd):[56] al-Walīd is an adult, ready to assume the duties of leadership; furthermore, his nomination would benefit ᶜAbd al-Malik's loyal suppporters ('us' in the poem):

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If you prefer your brother for (the caliphate), we, by your grandfather (al-Ḥakam), are not able to level any accusation against that;
But we are on our guard lest, through his sons, the sons by different mothers, we be given poison to drink.
And we fear, if you place dominion among them, clouds coming back without water.
Let not what you have milked belong tomorrow to people (who are such that) after tomorrow, your (own) sons will thirst.[57]

The last line of the quotation warns ᶜAbd al-Malik, and his supporters, of the perils of patrimonial politics: once the caliphate is surrendered to his sons' cognates, his progeny may lose it permanently.

A second poem, in praise of Ayyūb b. Sulaymān, whom his father sought to nominate as his heir in *c*. 715,[58] is a declaration of the loyalty of the poet al-Farazdaq and his 'Yemeni' tribe to Sulaymān and his son, after their exile under the previous caliph, al-Walīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik. It begins with the classical, pre-Islamic formula of the *dhikr* ('nostalgia') and *raḥīl* ('journey'), which leads to the prince, Ayyūb:

The one chosen after the ruler (*al-muṣṭafā baᶜd al-walī*), whose blessings for the people cover the earth with their light.

Praises of the prospective heir follow, but the last twelve lines of the poem are addressed to his father, Sulaymān b. ᶜAbd al-Malik. They begin with a reminder that Sulaymān has restored al-Farazdaq's eastern Arabian (and hence Yemeni) tribe to favour:

You have appointed for us, a guardian of justice after you, when the emir of the people did not given them justice (*jaᶜalta lanā li'l-ᶜadl baᶜdaka ḍāminan idhā ummatan lam yuᶜṭi ᶜadlan amīruhā*).[59]

Then, after lines on the divinely sanctioned punishment awaiting those who break their covenants with their rulers, the poem concludes with a comparison between Sulaymān and his son, Ayyūb, on the one hand, and the biblical and quranic David and Solomon, on the other:

You are the most righteous of people in justice and piety; you are the life-restoring earth's rain, and its purity
And you reign among us like David and his son, according to an established custom which guides those who follow it to righteousness (*fa-aṣbaḥtumā ka-Dāwūd wa-ibnihi ᶜalā sunna yuhdā bi-hā man yasīruhā*).[60]

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David and Solomon are the archetypal precursors of the imams, Sulaymān and Ayyūb, who lead the Muslims 'to righteousness'. Al-Farazdaq favoured this parallel: he had already made the same connection for ᶜAbd al-Malik and al-Walīd.[61] Indeed, they were arguably the most important models for divinely sanctioned succession and legitimate authority in late antique monotheist kingship: the biblical (and then quranic) archetype for royal succession was the transfer of monotheist kingship from David to Solomon, invoked by (among many others) al-Nābigha's panegyrics at the Lakhmid court at the end of the sixth century and by the patriarch of Constantinople in 626.[62]

Another monotheist pattern for succession was found in the life of the biblical and quranic Jacob (Ayyūb), the virtuous son and the rightful inheritor from his father, Joseph (Yūsuf). Al-Farazdaq's rival, the 'northerner' Jarīr, praised the same Ayyūb b. Sulaymān by invoking his biblical and quranic namesake.

> Truly, the imam whose bounty is hoped-for after the imam is the successor to the covenant (*walī al-ᶜahd*), Ayyūb.
>
> . . . . .
>
> You are the deputy of the Merciful (*al-khalīfa li'l-Raḥmān*), whom the people of the Psalms know and who(se name) is written in the Torah.
>
> (All of you), be like Joseph! When his brothers came, and they recognised him, he said: 'There is no blame today'.
>
> God blessed him and God gave him good fortune, when Jacob bequeathed his trust to Joseph (or, 'appointed him as his successor', *Yūsuf idh waṣṣāhu Yaᶜqūb*).[63]

The poem proclaims Jarīr's loyalty to Sulaymān's dynasty, and invokes the magnanimity of Joseph to his brothers, in order to seek the restoration of favour toward 'northerners' after their support for ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. al-Walīd against the claims of his uncle and grandfather's nominee, Sulaymān b. ᶜAbd al-Malik.[64] In so doing it also affirms the succession of Ayyūb b. Sulaymān, placing him in the same relationship to Sulaymān b. ᶜAbd al-Malik as his namesake to Joseph.

THE PROVINCES: THE *ṢĀᵓIFA* AND *ḤAJJ*

As in any pre-modern society, centralised political authority was beset by the problem of communication. Beyond the court, the regular coming-together of powerful groups under the leadership of the caliph or his senior representative maintained the links crucial to the continued exercise of power and to scrutiny of loyalties. Lists of leaders of the *ḥajj* and annual campaigns (formalised as *al-ṣāᵓifa* under the Marwanids) form two of the earliest strands in Islamic

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historiography. They reveal that these poles of the religio-political calendar were kept in the control of the ruling dynasty throughout the Umayyad (and early Abbasid) period: they were assigned to the caliph himself, a relative by blood or marriage, or to the *walī al-ʿahd*; leadership of the *ḥajj* was closely associated with leadership of the *umma*,[65] and appears to have been a prerequisite for the nomination of the *walī al-ʿahd*; at this gathering he could be acclaimed by the descendants of the Anṣār and Muhājirūn, the Meccans and the provincial Muslims.

As we have seen, Muʿāwiya sent his son Yazīd on campaign against the Romans, and led the *ḥajj* with him.[66] He also honoured his key supporters, and his son's potential rivals, Saʿīd b. al-Āṣ, Marwān b. al-Ḥakam and ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir, with 'public authority and high office' (*manābir . . . maʿālī al-ʿumūr*): governorship of Medina and the leadership of the *ḥajj* in the case of Saʿīd and Marwān, eastern commands in the case of ʿAbd Allāh.[67] Under ʿAbd al-Malik, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān was governor of the wealthy province of Miṣr.[68] Al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik led campaigns against the Romans in 77/696, 78/697, 79/698 and 80/699, and led the *ḥajj* in 78/698.[69] Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Malik led the *ḥajj* in 81/701.[70] In his father's caliphate, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-Walīd led a campaign against the Romans in 91/710 and led the *ḥajj* in 93/712 and perhaps in 94/713.[71] ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz led the *ḥajj* as governor of Medina in 87/706 and 92/711, which perhaps indicates his continuing claim on the succession.[72] (He is also said to have led it in in 98/717, a few months before the death of Sulaymān, whom he succeeded as caliph. However, this may be a retrospective modification of the record after ʿUmar's unconventional succession; if so, it serves to illustrate the importance of the *ḥajj* to legitimating the succession.[73]) Ayyūb and Dāwūd, Sulaymān's sons, were both given military commands.[74] Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik promoted his sons Muʿāwiya and Sulaymān as military commanders. Sulaymān b. Hishām led the *ḥajj* in 113/732 and perhaps also in 120/738, and Maslama led it in 119/737.[75] (Al-Walīd b. Yazīd, their rival as ʿUmar II's second designated heir, is said to have led the *ḥajj* in 116/735.[76]) Even al-Ḥakam and ʿUthmān, children when they became *walī al-ʿahd*s in 743, were said to have been given the governorships of Damascus and Ḥimṣ, respectively.[77]

PALACES AND TRIBAL DELEGATIONS

Candidates for the succession also promoted their claims through the art and ceremonial of royal courts. Like other members of the Umayyad family (and other wealthy leaders of important Arabian clans), the *wulāt al-ʿuhūd* built palatial residences, in which they received delegations and held public audiences. As for their Jafnid precursors in Syria, relations with the tribes of the Syrian steppes were crucial to Umayyad power; in establishing palatial complexes on the edges

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of the desert, the Umayyads followed a pattern set by the leaders of the Banū Ghassān. Many of the palace complexes follow Jafnid antecedents in that, like the architecture of many nomadic or semi-nomadic elites, the building is intended as the focal point in a temporary nomadic encampment. The stone and brick-built reception halls and mosques are small and intimate, in anticipation of the reception of small groups of representatives from the surrounding nomad forces.[78] They serve little purpose as fortifications – they are in the Umayyad heartlands; security, where needed, derives from their location in the territory of allies of the buildings' patron in the Syrian steppes.

While Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān's famous al-Khaḍrāʾ palace is said to have been located at the former Roman provincial capital of Damascus, the first known Umayyad palace outside an urban context is at Ḥuwwārīn, in the Syrian steppes between Damascus and Palmyra, where Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya resided among his Syrian Arab family and advisers for much of the time prior to his accession to the caliphate in 683.[79] Once ʿAbd al-Malik had reasserted control over Syria in *c*. 685, it seems that estates were distributed between his sons.[80] Al-Walīd built at Qaṣr Burquʿ, on the eastern edge of the Jordanian Ḥarra, near routes leading south into Arabia;[81] his brother Sulaymān's palace was at al-Ramla, in the coastal plains to the west of Jerusalam, in the *jund* of Filasṭīn.[82] Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik was associated with the palaces of al-Muwaqqar (already used by ʿAbd al-Malik in *c*. 690) and al-Qasṭal, both just to the south of ʿAmmān, on a route leading towards Arabia.[83] In the next generation, al-Walīd b. Yazīd inherited both these palaces from his father and most probably also built Quṣayr ʿAmra, roughly 60 kilometres to the east, near the oasis of al-Azraq in the Balqāʾ of Jordan;[84] he also appears to have resided at Khirbat al-Mafjar, near Jericho, on the West Bank of the Jordan.[85] Hishām's numerous building projects were in the north of Syria, on the routes leading through the low hills north-east of Damascus towards al-Raqqa, on the Euphrates;[86] his half-brother and close associate Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik had his residence in the adjacent lands north of al-Raqqa and the Euphrates.[87]

Although many of these sites may have been patronised by heirs to the caliphate, only two, Qaṣr Burquʿ and Quṣayr ʿAmra, have surviving features that explicitly link them directly with claims to the *wilāyat al-ʿahd*. Given the importance of the *ḥajj* in announcing the succession, it may be significant that both are on routes leading from Jordan into Arabia and thence to the Ḥijāz. At Qaṣr Burquʿ, en route from Jordan to Arabia, a reused lintel bears an inscription dated 81/700–1:

> O God! In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This is what the emir al-Walīd, the son of the Commander of the Faithful, built: these houses. In the year eighty-one.[88]

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We do not know what kind of construction al-Walīd sponsored at Qaṣr Burquᶜ – a site already in use since at least the third century CE – but his use of the epithet 'the emir . . . son of the Commander of the Faithful' (*al-amīr . . . ibn amīr al-muʾminīn*) in its foundation inscription emphasises his status as a senior member of the Umayyad elite and a son of the ruling caliph, ᶜAbd al-Malik. Later texts suggest that the title 'son of the Commander of the Faithful' was closely associated with a claim to succession to the caliphate.[89] The year 81/700–1 was the first year that al-Walīd had not campaigned against the Romans since 76/695–6; it was also three years after he had led the *ḥajj* and the same year that his brother (and fellow *walī al-ᶜahd*) Sulaymān led it. This chronology hints at the tension between the two brothers, which would become much more evident once al-Walīd became caliph.[90] Although the historical sources tend to date the nomination of the two brothers as successors to ᶜAbd al-Malik to after 82–4/701–4, when the death of ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. Marwān opened the succession, it seems that al-Walīd was already using a title associated with asserting a claim to the succession while Marwān's nominated second *walī al-ᶜahd* was still alive.

Much fuller evidence for the public expression of the *walī al-ᶜahd*'s authority is found at Quṣayr ᶜAmra, an intact Umayyad palace complex roughly 200 kilometres west-south-west of Qaṣr Burquᶜ, near the al-Azraq oasis. Like Qaṣr Burquᶜ, Quṣayr ᶜAmra is at the northern end of a route leading into Arabia. It is probable that the complex was commissioned by al-Walīd b. Yazīd while he was heir to Hishām; most likely it was begun in around 735.[91] The interior of the small audience hall and bath complex are elaborately decorated with painted murals. The audience hall's images are regal: around the entrance in the north wall are images of dancing girls and musicians; on the walls to the left are paintings of the hunt, with a lion felling a wild ass prominent high on the left at the end of the hall; to the right are more hunting scenes, images of bathing and wrestling or acrobatics and then, opposite the regal lion, the four kings of Rome, Spain, Iran and Aksum (each labelled as such) and two others, perhaps from Central Asia, India or the Far East, all paying homage with outstretched hands to the ruler seated in the central recess at the end of the hall. The eye of someone entering for an audience with the prince would be drawn towards this same central throne niche, which is directly opposite the door.

At the back of this niche, above the ruler's seat, is a painted image, in East Roman style, of an enthroned ruler, flanked by attendants, seated between two pillars, spanned by an arch above his throne. Many of the features of the painting recall East Roman images of Christ 'the World Ruler' (*pantocrator*) and of Adam, David and perhaps also Solomon. On the painted arch above the seated ruler is an inscription that invokes the language of the Qurʾān in blessing the building's patron:

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> O God! F[orgive] the successor to the covenant (?) of the Muslim men and women . . . well-being from God and mercy! (*Allāhu*[*mma*] *i*[*ghfir*] ?*li-walī* [ᶜ*a*]*hd*? *al-muslimīn wa'l-*[*mus*]*lima . . . ᶜāfiya min Allāh wa-ra*[*ḥ*]*ma*)[92]

The inscription is difficult to read. A clearer statement begins high on the wall to the left of the niche, above personifications of Philosophy, History and Poetry:

> O God! Bless the emir as you blessed David and Abraham and the family of his religion . . . gift . . . the . . . (*Allāhumma bārik ᶜalā al-amīr ka-mā bārak*[*ta ᶜalā*] *D*[*ā*]*wū*[*d wa-*]*Ibrahīm wa-āl millatihi . . . ᶜaṭīya . . . al- . . .*)[93]

This inscription clearly connects the palace's emir with the family (*āl*) and religion (*milla*) of Abraham (both of which are also quranic formulas[94]), with God's blessing of Abraham, the monotheist patriarch, and with David, the founder of the first monotheist royal dynasty.

The same themes may also be taken up lower on the corresponding wall to the right of the throne niche, where a reclining woman, fanned by an attendant, is depicted with two children. A third inscription once occupied a cartouche in north Arabian style below this painting, but the frame is now blank apart from the opening basmala. The woman may represent Sarah, wife of Abraham, or Hagar, his concubine, or the mother(s) of al-Walīd's children – interpretations are varied, and, in the light of the destruction of all of the inscriptions around the image save the three Greek letters *AR*[*A* or *R*] and the Greek word *NIKĒ* ('victory'), are almost inevitably somewhat speculative.[95] It is possible that the image alludes to all four women, given that both Abraham and al-Walīd each produced two heirs by a wife and a concubine.

What is certain, in the light of the representation of the ruler in the throne niche and the invocation of Abraham and David in the inscription to its left, is the continued importance of the Judaic patriarchs in the representation of legitimate dynastic rule under the later Umayyads, as in earlier Umayyad and pre-Islamic Roman and Arabian representations of monarchy.[96] Al-Walīd b. Yazīd was the heir to a claim to universal monarchy on earth under a covenant with the monotheist God, which he expected to pass to his progeny. The paintings and inscriptions he commissioned for the south wall (*qibla*) of Quṣayr ᶜAmra invoked three biblical and quranic figures that were especially relevant to his circumstances: Adam, the first man, first ruler and, in mid-eighth-century quranic exegesis, Humanity's representative in taking the primordial covenant with God (to whom we will return in Chapter 9); Abraham, the quranic founder of Islam and the father of two heirs by a wife and a concubine; and David, God's dynast.

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CONCLUSION

The exegete, lawyer and historian al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) preserves a unique set of letters sent by the governor of Iraq, ᶜUmar b. Ḥubayra, to the governor of Khurasan, Naṣr b. Sayyār, concerning the nomination of al-Walīd II's two sons as his *walī al-ᶜahd*s in 743. For reasons discussed further in Chapter 8, it is quite possible, even likely, that these early tenth-century copies of 'state letters' are actually approximations of original mid-eighth-century documents written on behalf of al-Walīd II. In a letter to be read out at the provincial mosque prior to the governor's taking of the pledge of allegiance on behalf of the two heirs from the assembled Muslims, it was explained that:

> The Commander of the Faithful has deemed it best to make a covenant after a covenant, so that you may be in the same position as those who were before you, in a respite of ample hope and inner tranquility, a flourishing state of concord, and a knowledge of the state of affairs which God has established as a protection, rescue, goodness and life for his people and as a humiliation, loss and restraint for every hypocrite and godless person who desires the destruction of this religion and the corruption of its adherents.[97]

A 'covenant after a covenant' placed the Muslims, 'in the same position as those who were before you': by 743, the taking of the pledge of allegiance to two successors had become a custom which was its own justification.

Once a means for ensuring dynastic succession had been established, the conservatism inherent in such political practice tended to lead to its continuation. Acceptance of the process was no doubt helped by the obvious requirement for such a system if the unity of the empire was to be sustained, as well as the legitimacy it derived from existing Near Eastern customs for succession to religio-political leadership. However, although the idea of the succession became less contentious, the choice of successor became a focus of conflict. From the outset the Umayyad dynasty held that the caliphate was its patrimonial possession by hereditary right. Consultation took place within the Umayyad kin-group and their most powerful supporters from the tribes, among whom the succession was the focus of political competition. They then sought to persuade the wider Muslim constituency of the legitimacy of their choice and required pledges of allegiance under God's covenant to bind them to it. In so doing, they sought to assert their own authority as God's designated caliphs against prevalent ideas that God's people elected His deputy; many rebellions against the Umayyads appealed to the idea of consultation (*shūrā*) as a just alternative to Umayyad oppression (*ẓulm*, *jabābira*).[98]

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Marwanid efforts at legitimation were directed both at supporters in the internal conflict over the succession and at others who needed to be persuaded of Marwanid legitimacy *per se*. The Marwanid aniconic coinage, their public and courtly ceremonial, and their monumental religio-political architecture were all manifestations of this state-sponsored Islamic symbolism.[99] The entourage of soldiers, advisers, scribes and courtiers that surrounded the caliph facilitated continuities in the administration across reigns, so that by the late Marwanid period a distinctively Islamic state, the forms of which were replicated by each generation, was well established. In al-Walīd II's letter to the provinces, quranic passages referring to Adam as 'God's caliph on earth' and taken from the verse about David's victory over Goliath were cited in support of his and his two sons' authority over the Muslims:[100] the literary productions of al-Walīd II's court echoed its iconography, in which the Judaic patriarchs were ideal models of divinely sanctioned dynastic succession to rule, as they had been for his Umayyad, Roman, Naṣrid and Ḥimyarite precursors.

The palace al-Walīd II constructed when he was the nominated successor to his uncle Hishām appears to be unfinished, or at least very little used.[101] It is in part because of its abandonment that its remarkable evidence for the iconography of the court of a late Umayyad heir to the caliphate has survived. However, it is only one of many testaments to the Umayyads' use of the material and cultural resources of late antique Syria, Egypt and Iraq in the public projection of claims to legitimate authority. In the following chapters, other aspects of this are examined, first through the evidence for the rituals of succession and accession, and then through the problematic literary evidence for the written pronouncements of the later Marwanid caliphs at those rituals.

NOTES

1. For Rome and Iran, see above, pp. 3–7; on Ethiopia, see Munro-Hay, *Aksum*, 155ff.; on South Arabia, Müller, 'Outline', 52; Robin, 'Ḥimyar et Israël', 860–1, 896–9.
2. See above, pp. 6–7, 88, 90, 93–4.
3. Biddle, 'Development', 99, 102–3, 118, 131, 146–7, 148; Shahid, 'Ghassān *post* Ghassān'.
4. For scansion, the definite article *al-* is missing from *walī al-ᶜahd*.
5. Ṭab., ii, 1283, l. 17.
6. Jarīr, *Dīwān*, 9; cf. Ṭab., ii, 1283–4.
7. Chejne, *Succession*, 39.
8. See above, p. 69, and below, pp. 310–11.
9. e.g. al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 162; Ṭab., ii, 1317, 1869.
10. Ibn Qutayba, *ᶜUyūn*, iv, 246–51; IAṬ, fos 125aff.; Qal., ix, 359–60. See further below, pp. 310–11.
11. al-Qāḍī, 'Religious foundation'; Crone, *Political Thought*, 33ff.
12. ᶜAbbās, *ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 193, translated below.

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13. Fowden, *Quṣayr ʿAmra*, 126, and below, pp. 127–8. For *al-muslimūn wa'l-muslimāt*, see Q 33.35.
14. Crone '*Shūrā*', 16ff.
15. ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 193, §3.
16. Following ʿAbbās.
17. ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 216, §21.
18. Ṭab., ii, 1760, tr. after Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 122; cf. ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 314–5, §4; al-Ṭabarī, *History* (C. Hillenbrand), xxvi, 111.
19. See above, pp. 92–4.
20. Bal., iv/2, 10ff.; Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 19.
21. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Khālid b. Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya, Abū Hāshim' (M. Ullmann).
22. al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 179; Bal., iv/1, 441ff. = Bal.(D), v, 25ff.; Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 19, 124–8; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'ʿAmr b. Saʿīd' (K. V. Zetterstein).
23. al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 160; Bal., iv/2, 55–6 = Bal.(D), v, 332; Bal.(D) vii, 62; Ṭab., ii, 1164–9; *Agh.*, xvi, 58–60; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān' (K. V. Zetterstein).
24. Bal., iv/2, 563 = Bal.(D), vi, 374; Bal.(D), vii, 9, 10, 518, 521; Ṭab., ii, 1785; [Pseudo-] Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma*, ii, 191–2; Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, 18–20. For Roman parallels, see Dagron, *Emperor*, 29ff.
25. al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 162; Ṭab., ii, 1317; Bosworth, 'Rajāʾ', 48, n. 6.
26. Bosworth, 'Rajāʾ', 45ff. For ʿUmar's considering passing the caliphate outside the Marwanids for pious reasons, see Ṭab., ii, 1349; *ʿUyūn*, 64; Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, 311; Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 76–7.
27. Bal., iv/2, 104 = Bal.(D), v, 371.
28. Bal.(D), vii, 516; Ṭab., ii, 1776.
29. On the succession to al-Walīd I, see Ṭab., ii, 1274–5, 1283–4; see further below, pp. 121–2. For Sulaymān making his son Ayyūb a *walī al-ʿahd*: Bal.(D), vii, 41–2, 55–6; Ṭab., ii, 1317; Bosworth, 'Rajāʾ', 48–9.
30. Bal.(D), vii, 312, 329; Ṭab., ii, 1740–52; *Agh.*, xv, 50–1 (where Umm Ḥakīm, mother of Maslama b. Hishām, agitates against al-Walīd).
31. Ṭab., ii, 1755–64.
32. Crone, *Slaves*, 42–5; Kennedy, *Prophet*, 112ff.; Hawting, *First Dynasty*, 90ff.
33. Bal.(D), vii, 164, 540, 549, 550–2; Din., 350.
34. Bal.(D), vii, 568.
35. Bal.(D), vii, 476; Ṭab., ii, 1740ff., where al-Walīd b. Yazīd was only 11 years old when he was appointed after Hishām in *c*. 720; puberty was usually a prerequisite for the *bayʿa*: *Agh*., vi, 135.
36. Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 19, 124–8.
37. Bal.(D), vii, 540.
38. See above, pp. 90–1.
39. e.g. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān; ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-Walīd; Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik; Maslama b. Hishām; ʿUthmān b. al-Walīd.
40. Bal.(D), vii, 29.
41. The marriage of ʿAbd al-Malik's daughter Fāṭima to ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz may have helped to buy his acquiescence in the succession of al-Walīd and Sulaymān on the death of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz; *Agh.*, iv, 60, for her prestige as daughter, granddaughter, sister and wife of caliphs.
42. Sons of women from ʿAbd Shams: Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān; Muʿāwiya b. Yazīd. Sons of Qurashīs: Marwān b. al-Ḥakam; ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. Sons of other noble Arab

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women: Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya; Khālid b. Yazīd; al-Walīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik; Sulaymān b. ᶜAbd al-Malik; Ayyūb b. Sulaymān; Hishām b. ᶜAbd al-Malik; al-Walīd b. Yazīd. See the relevant parts of Bal./Bal.(D), Yaq.; *ᶜUyūn*.

43. Bosworth, 'Rajāʾ', 49, n. 4. Examples include Yazīd I (sometimes known as Ibn ᶜĀtika), the son of ᶜĀtika b. Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya (Bal.[D], vii, 186; Ṭab., ii, 1174, 1317), ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz, son of Umm ᶜĀṣim b. ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (Yaq., ii, 361), Hishām b. ᶜAbd al-Malik, son of ᶜĀʾisha b. Hishām b. Ismāᶜīl al-Makhzūmī, the daughter of an important Qaysī commander (al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 328; Bal.[D], vii, 310; Ṭab., ii, 1466; cf. Jarīr, *Dīwān*, 149). Exceptions have Prophetic *ism*s (e.g., Ayyūb and Dāwūd, the sons of Sulaymān).
44. al-Ḥakam b. al-Walīd II (*Agh.*, vi, 135), Yazīd b. al-Walīd I (Bal.[D], vii, 530, *ᶜUyūn*, i, 148 (b. Mukhdaj b. Yazdgird)) and Marwān b. Muḥammad (Bal., iv/2, 102 = Bal.[D], v, 370; Bal.[D], vii, 561) were all the progeny of concubines. On the contrast with early Abbasid practice, see below, p. 210.
45. Bal.(D), vii, 312.
46. Bal.(D), vii, 329, 478–80; Ṭab., ii, 1742; *Agh.*, vi, 101–2, vii, 2–11. Cf. Jarīr, *Dīwān*, 149.
47. *Agh.*, vi, 103–4.
48. See above, pp. 90–1, 102–6.
49. Crone, 'Qays and Yemen', 44–9.
50. Crone, 'Qays and Yemen', 49ff.
51. Crone, 'Qays and Yemen', 26–7, 51–2; cf. Crone, *Slaves*, 105.
52. Crone, 'Qays and Yemen', 27.
53. Crone, *Slaves*, 45; Crone, 'Qays and Yemen', 55.
54. See above, pp. 92–4, 102–6. The poetry and the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* await further study; see, e.g., Jarīr, *Dīwān*, 180ff.; Far.[1] ii, no. 394; Ṭab., ii, 1742, 1744, 1756; *Agh.*, vi, 104–5, xv, 51, xvi, 60.
55. Cf. Deuteronomy, 28: 1–9; Esther 1: 6; Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, 41; Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 123.
56. Cf. Miskīn at Muᶜāwiya's court; see above, pp. 92–4.
57. Ṭab., ii, 1166; tr. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxiii (M. Hinds), 110; cf. Bal., iv/2, 565 = Bal.(D), vi, 373; *Agh.*, xvii, 60.
58. Eisener, *Sulaimān*, 215.
59. Far., i, 215.
60. Far., i, 215.
61. Far., i, 287.
62. See above, pp. 6–7, 33; cf. p. 94.
63. Jarīr, *Dīwān*, 34, 35; cf. Eisener, *Sulaimān*, 213–14.
64. Cf. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 81, n. 146; Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 273.
65. Yaq., ii, 321; Jarīr, *Dīwān*, 304 (elegy for ᶜUmar II, 'the best of those that have led the *ḥajj* and worn a turban'). For the Abbasid period, see, e.g., Ṭab., iii, 99, 981–2; Mas., iv, §2728 (vii, 42–3).
66. See above, pp. 90–1.
67. Bal., iv/1, 90–1 = Bal.(D), iv, 103–4. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam led the *ḥajj* three or four times: Khal., 206, 207, 223 (43/664, 45/666 and 54/674); Ṭab., ii, 27, 81, 85, 170, 172 (43/664, 45/666, 48/668–9, 54/673–4, 55/675). Likewise, Saᶜīd b. ᶜAmr: Khal., 209, 218, 222 (48/668–9, 49/670, 52/672 and 53/672–3); Ṭab., ii, 87, 157, 163 (49/670, 52/672 and 53/672–3). On ᶜAbd Allāh: *EI*[2], s.v. '*ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜĀmir' (H. A. R. Gibb).

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68. Bal., iv/1, 56 = Bal.(D), v, 332.
69. Campaigns: Khal., 276, 278; Yaq., ii, 337; Ṭab., ii, 1032. *Ḥajj*: Khal., 277; Ṭab., ii, 1035.
70. Khal., 281; Ṭab., ii, 1063. Ṭab., ii, 1047, also has Sulaymān lead it in 80/699–700, but Khal., 280, and Yaq., ii, 336, say that ᶜAbān b. ᶜUthmān, the governor of Medina (Ṭab., ii, 1047), led it.
71. Ṭab., ii, 1217, 1255, 1266.
72. Khal., 301, 311; Ṭab., ii, 1182, 1235–6.
73. [Pseudo-] Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma*, ii, 261–2 (on the authority of Rajāʾ b. Ḥaywa); 261, n.1, points out that Khalīfa says Sulaymān led the *ḥajj* in 97/716 and ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. Khālid b. Usayd led it in 98/717 (Khal., 314, 315).
74. See above, n. 29.
75. Muᶜāwiya b. Hishām led the summer campaign against the Romans in every year between 107/725 and 118/736, except 116/735, often with his brother, Sulaymān b. Hishām: Khal., 337–49; *ᶜUyūn*, 90ff. (110/728–9 and 115/733); Jarīr, *Dīwān*, 155. On Sulaymān and the *ḥajj,* see Khal., 345; Ṭab., ii, 1666. For Maslama and the *ḥajj,* see Khal., 349; Ṭab., ii, 1635, 1742; *Agh.*, xv, 51 (where leading the *ḥajj* is associated with preparation for the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd*).
76. Khal., 347, 360.
77. Bal.(D), vii, 500.
78. Helms, *Early Islamic Architecture*.
79. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ḥuwwārīn or Ḥawwārīn' (D. Sourdel).
80. Bacharach, 'Marwanid Umayyad building', 28 (his reconstruction of who patronised what is now somewhat obsolete).
81. Gaube, 'Qaṣr Burquᶜ'.
82. Luz, 'Construction'; Fowden, *Quṣayr ᶜAmra*, 146.
83. Fowden, *Quṣayr ᶜAmra*, 152–3.
84. Fowden, *Quṣayr ᶜAmra*, esp. 142ff.
85. Hamilton, 'Who built Khirbat al-Mafjar?'.
86. Fowden, *Quṣayr ᶜAmra*, 164ff.
87. Haase, 'Excavations at Madīnat al-Fār'.
88. Gaube, 'Qaṣr Burquᶜ', 93, 97, pl. xxxi.1.
89. See below, pp. 156, 169, 188.
90. See above, pp. 120–1, and below, pp. 135–6.
91. Fowden, *Quṣayr ᶜAmra*, 31ff., 142ff.
92. Fowden, *Quṣayr ᶜAmra*, 126, citing Imbert, *Corpus.* Cf. Q 4.43, 99, Q 4.149, Q 22.60, Q 58.2, Q 33.35; Q 33.73.
93. Fowden, *Quṣayr ᶜAmra*, 127, again citing Imbert, *Corpus*.
94. Cf., e.g., Q 4.45, 34.13 and Q 2.130, 12.38, *et al*.
95. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 143–9; Fowden, *Quṣayr ᶜAmra*, 175ff., 250.
96. Cf. the palace of Khirbat al-Mafjar, where symbolic references to Solomon appear above the real enthroned ruler: Soucek, 'Solomon's throne', 124.
97. Ṭab., ii, 1763; tr. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 124.
98. Crone, '*Shūrā*'.
99. See above, pp. 82–3.
100. Ṭab., ii, 1758, ll. 7–9 (Q 2.251), 1759, ll. 1–3 (Q 2.30).
101. Fowden, *Quṣayr ᶜAmra*, 155–60.

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CHAPTER

7

MARWANID RITUALS OF ACCESSION AND SUCCESSION

Because of the secondary, and very laconic and fragmentary, literary evidence for Marwanid rituals of accession and succession only a fraction of their symbolic resonances can now be glimpsed. However, when the texts are read alongside the material evidence for the architectural settings of rituals of accession and succession, and the evidence for the dress and regalia of the ruler, some sense of the form and meaning of these rituals can be gained. The two *bayᶜa*s to Marwān I and Yazīd III, in 684 and 744 respectively, were remembered in more detail because they were of great political signifiance. Even in these cases, however, the rituals themselves are not discussed. In what follows, a general picture of the location of the ceremonial of Marwanid accession and succession, the sequence of events and participation in them is reconstructed. This is followed by a discussion of the physical appearance and regalia of the caliph, as reflected in the surviving Umayyad images of him.

LOCATION

Almost all Marwanid ceremonies of acclamation took place at a congregational mosque. From the outset of the foundation of a Muslim community the place of assembly for prayer had also been the main political forum and gathering-place. By the early eighth century, the congregational mosque had taken on a monumental character and had become part of a complex of governmental and administrative buildings at the centre of Arabian–Muslim settlements. The palace of the caliph or his representative was usually adjacent to the mosque. Often it was located immediately behind its *qibla* wall, with a passage between the two allowing the ruler to enter near the *miḥrāb* and *minbar* without passing through

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the assembled congregation. Thus, the architectural form of the mosque–palace complex, where the palace literally stood between those praying and the direction of their prayer, expressed the ruler's dual role as emir and imam.[1]

The early Marwanid period saw the formulation of a distinctive architectural expression of caliphal authority. This began with ʿAbd al-Malik's construction of the Dome of the Rock, which was completed in 692. ʿAbd al-Malik, his son al-Walīd I and their Iraqi governor, al-Ḥajjāj (r. 694–715), rebuilt the al-Aqṣāʾ on the Temple Mount (*c*. 705), built the Syrian garrison in Iraq, Wāsiṭ (*c*. 705), with a mosque-palace complex at its centre, and rebuilt the Great Mosque of Damascus (*c*. 705), the Prophet's mosque at Medina (*c*. 707) and the Great Mosque at Ṣanʿa (*c*. 705–15). These monumental architectural spaces were the setting for the development of a ceremonial of legitimate Marwanid rule, the metropolitan variants of which took place in Jerusalem and Damascus.

Jerusalem may have been the location of ʿAbd al-Malik's accession in Ramaḍān 65/April 685.[2] His construction of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount to the north of the Masjid al-Aqṣā between *c*. 687 and 692 shows the continued importance of the city to the Umayyad elite. Indeed, ʿAbd al-Malik's second successor, Sulaymān, is said to have taken pledges of allegiance inside the Dome of the Rock in 715, and ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz took oaths from Sulaymān's former officials (*ʿummāl*, sing. *ʿāmil*) there.[3] However, Jerusalem was never again the site of a caliphal accession, which suggests a shift in Umayyad rhetoric or political priorities, or both. Instead Damascus became the pre-eminent location for Marwanid ritual, albeit as the metropolis of what remained a peripatetic caliphal court.

Damascus was already an alternative political centre in 660. It was an obvious choice – a former Roman provincial capital, located in the heartland of the Kalb and in the middle of the province of Syria. Muʿāwiya made it his residence, and both Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya and Muʿāwiya b. Yazīd were, acclaimed there in 680 and 683; the third Marwanid caliph, al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik, also took power in Damascus in 705. This may merely have been a consequence of ʿAbd al-Malik having died there, but, given the tension between al-Walīd and his brother Sulaymān, it seems likely that it was a deliberate decision by al-Walīd to distance himself, physically and symbolically, from his sibling. Sulaymān was already building al-Ramla one day's journey from Jerusalem and owned various estates in the same region of Filasṭīn. In the year of his accession, al-Walīd expanded and rebuilt the congregational mosque in Damascus on a scale and in a style that alluded to Roman imperial architecture. The rectangular periphery of the Roman church of St John the Baptist was incorporated into the mosque courtyard, together with the church itself. The new prayer hall that filled the southern two-fifths of the space was given an internal façade that recalled that of the Roman

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imperial palace at Ravenna and suggests the purpose of mosque as a location for caliphal ceremonial.[4] The interior of the mosque and the courtyard was lavishly decorated with non-figural mosaic representations of Paradise.[5]

After his accession in 715 Sulaymān went on to rule from Jerusalem and nearby al-Ramla in the south and Dābiq, near Aleppo, in the north. Thereafter, the accession tended to follow the caliph: in 717 ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz was acclaimed at the muster-ground of Dābiq, where Sulaymān had died as the Umayyad's forces gathered for the summer campaign; Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik was made caliph at Dayr Simʿān, where the Umayyad family had gathered during ʿUmar's illness. Hishām was publicly acclaimed at Damascus, and ruled from there and from al-Ruṣāfa, over 350 kilometres to the north, less than one day's journey from the Euphrates. Hishām developed al-Ruṣāfa (Roman Sergiopolis) into a second imperial centre that included a mosque modelled on al-Walīd I's mosque in Damascus (albeit on a smaller scale).[6] On Hishām's death, al-Walīd II travelled to al-Ruṣāfa from al-Azraq, in southern Jordan, to receive the *bayʿa*. The last two Umayyad caliphs to receive widespread recognition were Yazīd III and Marwān II, for whom the support of the tribal groupings of 'Yemen' and 'Qays', respectively, was crucial: Yazīd III launched his rebellion against al-Walīd II from Damascus – still a 'Yemeni' stronghold; Marwān took the pledges of his Qaysī supporters in his territory in the Jazīra, at Ḥarrān.

PARTICIPATION AND THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Al-ahl and *al-nās* are the most common words used to describe those pledging allegiance both at the metropolis and in the provinces.[7] They are near-synonyms, denoting 'the army', or 'the troops'. In the early Umayyad period this would have been almost the same as saying 'the male tribesmen'; the oath of allegiance was a pledge for loyalty in war above all. Occasionally the sources are a little more detailed about attendance at caliphal *bayʿa*s, with short phrases that describe those present. For example, on the death of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam in 685, the 'Umayyads and the leaders of the Syrians' (*banū Umayya wa-ashrāf ahl al-Shām*) are said to have negotiated the succession of his son, ʿAbd al-Malik.[8] Slightly fuller descriptions of those present at a pledge of allegiance survive from the two crises with which the Marwanid caliphate began and ended: the pledge of the Umayyad family and the Yemeni tribes to Marwān b. al-Ḥakam in 684 and the pledge to Yazīd III in 744; in both cases, it was the Syrian tribesmen, critical to the success of their Marwanid candidate, who were said to have pledged allegiance to him.[9]

Versions of many of the speeches that preceded the taking of the handclasp of the *bayʿa* are preserved in the later sources, and, although it is unlikely that any

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is a verbatim record, it is plausible that they reflect the forms of such addresses and occasionally their content: eloquent or important sermons were remembered in the same way as poetry was remembered – for their literary merit as much as their historical or political import.[10] Other rituals of allegiance followed: messages were sent out to the provincial governors, confirming their positions and requesting that they take the *bayᶜa* from those under their command and return a message affirming their allegiance (other governors were deposed and replaced); delegations also sometimes came to the caliph from the provinces.

With the establishment of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd*, these ceremonies took on a more affirmatory and proclamatory character: the choice of the caliph had already been made by the pledges given to him during his predecessor's lifetime. There were only five occasions in the Umayyad period where there was no *walī al-ᶜahd*: the accession of Muᶜāwiya in *c*. 660–1; the election of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam in 684 near Damascus; and the accessions of Yazīd III, Marwān II and Ibrāhīm b. al-Walīd, which all took place in the anarchy of 744 (though some, clearly spurious, traditions assert that Marwān II had been formally nominated to succeed al-Ḥakam and ᶜUthmān b. al-Walīd). In all other cases, the death of the previous incumbent was the starting-point for the ritual of the accession of his nominated successor.

The caliph's corpse was carried on a bier, perhaps in a procession, and placed in a tomb.[11] The name of the leader of this ceremony, who prayed over (*ṣallā ᶜalā*) the body and oversaw the burial (*dafana*), seems to be an early strand of the Arabic historical tradition, appearing in Khalīfa's terse entries on the caliphs. When the caliph's successor was present, he claimed the right to pray over and bury the dead caliph;[12] ᶜAbd al-Malik is said to have referred to this obligation in his testament to his son al-Walīd in 705.[13] When the *walī al-ᶜahd* was not present, a senior member of the dynasty, or the caliph's son, prayed for the dead caliph instead.[14] Only Ibrāhīm and Marwān II died in circumstances that precluded the usual rites at their deaths.[15]

If the *walī al-ᶜahd* was not already present at the caliph's death, then the post-messengers (*barīd*) brought him the news, along with the caliphal insignia of the staff and seal-ring. This was the case for Yazīd I, at Ḥuwwārīn when Muᶜāwiya died in Damascus, for Sulaymān, in near-exile at al-Ramla when al-Walīd I died in Damascus, for Hishām, at al-Zaytūna, near al-Ruṣāfa in north Syria, when Yazīd II died, and for al-Walīd II, in exile at al-Azraq on the death of Hishām at al-Ruṣāfa.[16] The *walī al-ᶜahd* would then return post-haste to the location of the caliph's death to receive the pledge of allegiance from those in attendance. Where the *walī al-ᶜahd* was already present, then the announcement of the caliph's death, his burial and the pledge of allegiance to his successor usually all took place on the same day, led by the new caliph.[17] Panegyric poetry was recited

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by the first to 'stand before' the new caliph (*qāma ilayhi*).[18] Other formalities included 'congratulation and condolence' (*al-tahniʾa wa'l-taʿziya*). This is an expression found in sources from the Abbasid period, but written letters of condolence (*taʿziya*) for relatives of the caliph are extant from the last decades of the Umayyad period in later copies, and it seems likely that similar expressions were presented to the new caliph, either orally or in writing from the outset of the Umayyad period.[19]

Those present at pledges of allegiance to *walī al-ʿahd*s are passed over even more quickly than those at accessional *bayʿa*s. As at Muʿāwiya's nomination of Yazīd in the 670s, the Umayyads and their immediate supporters at the metropolis were the first constituency that had to be persuaded. The intrigue at court recorded in the sources is testament to the importance of the succession in the politics of the ruling Arabian elite. That the leadership of the *ḥajj* and of the *ṣāʾifa* were both offices given to candidates for the *wilāyat al-ʿahd* indicates the importance of the annual pilgrimage and the campaigns in reaching the Ḥijāzī population and the army. As with caliphal *bayʿa*s, the sources also often refer to 'writing to the provinces' to promulgate the decision: the impression is of a decision taken by a ruling elite and then imposed on the provinces by their emirs and promulgated through the offices of imperial and provincial administration – the *dīwān*, *barīd* and *shurṭa* ('chancery', 'post' and 'elite guard').[20] Whereas Muʿāwiya struggled to impose his nominee on Iraq and the Ḥijāz in the 670s, there is no record of effective resistance to Umayyad nominations until the revolt of Yazīd III in 744 – a measure of the greater cohesion and coercive power of the Marwanid state.

THE IMAGE OF THE RULER

The architectural context of Marwanid accession ceremonial affirmed the symbolism of the ritual itself, in which their claim to embody both sacerdotal and royal authority was clear: they took place in the mosques that adjoined their palaces (or, in the case of the Dome of the Rock – and, with the Zubayrids and others, the Kaʿba – at shrines[21]). Furthermore, no priest intervened as the representative of God, as he could, and usually did, in both Iran and Rome. God's covenant was instead enacted, unmediated, between His chosen ruler and His flock. The precedents to which Umayyad literary rhetoric alludes in claiming this elevated status are most often those of the quranic prophet-kings, David and Solomon, as well as of other biblical and quranic prophets and patriarchs, most notably, Adam, Abraham and Jacob (also the bearers of God's covenant in Judaeo-Christian tradition). Thus, although Umayyad prose rhetoric insisted that the era of the prophets was ended, having been replaced by the era of the caliphs

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('successors', or 'delegates'), the pattern for caliphal authority was that of those prophets who had been world-rulers.

Visual expressions of this claim were made through the widely recognised symbols of Near Eastern sacral kingship. Beyond the architecture of their palaces and mosques, the only surviving primary evidence for these expressions is found in the extant representations of the Marwanid dynasty, on the 'transitional' coins and in images at three of their rural palaces: Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, Khirbat al-Mafjar and Quṣayr ʿAmra. (One might also add the unique surviving fragment of court regalia from this period, a fragment of silk clothing from the reign of either Marwān I or Marwān II.[22]) From the point of view of reconstructing the actual appearance of the Marwanid rulers, the problem with these representations (excepting the silk fragment) is that they were mediated through the visual traditions of the artisans who produced them.[23] However, these images *are* evidence of how the rulers were represented to their subjects – very publicly in the case of the coinage, and to those who were permitted to enter their rural palaces in the case of the sculptures and frescoes. The images portray the Umayyad rulers as Near Eastern kings, through a distinctively Mesopotamian fusion of traditional representations of the Sasanian *shāhānshāh* and the Roman *basileus* (and thus of the Zoroastrian and biblical archetypes to which these representations in turn referred).

The portrait of the 'standing caliph', found on some examples of the 'transitional' coinage from *c*. 693–7, is most likely a representation of ʿAbd al-Malik, and is by far the earliest surviving image of a caliph.[24] The image is framed by the Arabic phrase *khalīfat Allāh amīr al-muʾminīn* ('God's Caliph, Commander of the Faithful'), or with variants of it. The image of ruler on these gold, copper and sometimes silver coins is of a bearded man, with long hair (or a long headscarf?), his right hand on the hilt of the sword that hangs on his left. Another object hangs to his right. It appears to be a three-tasselled rope of some sort – perhaps the 'whip' mentioned as an instrument of justice alongside the sword in traditions about the early caliphs.[25] He wears a long patterned robe wrap with a decorated border.

These images of the caliph on coins were quickly replaced by quranic verses, and, after the coins of *c*. 693–7, there is a thirty-year hiatus in the surviving visual evidence for the Muslim ruler. All four of the other images were found in the surviving palaces of ʿAbd al-Malik's later successors. At Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, built by the caliph Hishām in 727, there are two depictions of the enthroned ruler in sculpted stucco. In each, the caliph is seated, facing the viewer. One evokes an Iranian milieu: his symmetrical posture, with feet together and knees apart, is distinctively Iranian; it resembles that of the enthroned prince on the Iranian 'Qazwīn plate', which dates from *c*. 650–800.[26] His earrings, and what may

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even be a diadem, recall Iranian precedents (but that these features had also been adopted in a royal portrait from Roman Italy by the sixth century is a reminder that sharp distinctions between 'Roman' and 'Iranian' iconography are not always helpful).[27] Inside the palace, another image of the seated ruler survives only from the waist down: the fall of his clothing, the more naturalistic placement of his feet and the chairlike throne and footstool recall Roman images of royal authority.[28] This latter sculpture anticipates the frescoes at Quṣayr ʿAmra – perhaps painted for the future al-Walīd II in *c*. 735 – where the image of the prince enthroned beneath an arch evokes Roman images of the seated emperor, and of Adam, David and Christ the Universal Ruler (Gk *pantocrator*), as well, perhaps, as literary depictions of Solomon (and perhaps his Iranian equivalent, Jamshīd) as the lord of earth, water and air.[29]

The fourth image of a Marwanid ruler derives from Khirbat al-Mafjar – perhaps also commissioned by al-Walīd II, while he as *walī al-ʿahd* under Hishām in the 730s or 740s. This near life-size statue of a standing prince closely resembles those on the coins minted in the name of al-Walīd II's grandfather, ʿAbd al-Malik. It depicts a bearded ruler, who grips a (now lost) object on his left side (as on the coins, but this time with his left hand) and wears a long wrap (as on the coins), which is stiff-looking, as if of heavy silk (as on some of the coins) and may have been painted red. The right side of the statue is lost; as we have seen, the image on the 'standing-caliph' coin has a 'whip' here. On his head he wears what is either a turban, or perhaps a *qalansuwa* (the tall cap of the Iranian nobility). As with the coins, the overall impression is of Iranian influence on the representation of the caliph.[30]

The crown or diadem is absent from most, if not all, of these representations of the caliph. As we have seen, at Khirbat al-Mafjar, the statue of the ruler may wear a turban or a *qalansuwa*; the head of the prince at Quṣayr ʿAmra is unadorned, as is that of the 'standing caliph' of the coins. A diadem just might be present in one of the images of Hishām at Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī and perhaps on some coins.[31] This severe etiolation of the symbolism of the crown in comparison to the kings of Rome and Iran is borne out in the literary source material, where there is little mention of crowns and no mention of 'coronation' (*tatwīj*). The turban (*ʿimāma*), it is true, could be called the 'crown of the Arabs' (*tāj al-ʿarab*),[32] but there was no coronation, and the headgear was distinct from Roman and Iranian bands of precious metal (Ar. *tāj* or *iklīl*).[33] This dramatic break with the symbolism and rituals of late antique imperial monarchy perhaps reflects both the Arabian nomads' hostility to kingship as symbolic of subjugation to state power and the Qurʾān's strong articulation of the Judaeo-Christian ambivalence to kingship (Q 2.114 etc.).[34] The caliph most certainly could not *be crowned* by God's special representative, because there was no class of intermediaries between God and

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Man in the early Islamic polity, only the caliph himself, God's delegate, and the Muslims, God's people.

Instead, the two most frequently mentioned emblems of Umayyad caliphal power and authority are the staff (*ʿaṣā*) and the signet ring (*khātam*). The staff and seal-ring (and, in the later Marwanid period, sometimes the cloak) are particularly closely associated with the transfer of authority to the new caliph on his precursor's death.[35] All three items were intimately associated with monarchic power in the ancient and late antique Near East and so it is unsurprising to find them associated more or less closely with the caliphate from the outset.[36] The staff was inseparable from the idea of leadership and covenant:[37] ʿUthmān warned his opponents not to 'shatter the staff' and break the unity of the Muslims;[38] Muʿāwiya was the 'wood (staff) of the Arabs' (*ʿūd al-ʿarab*);[39] for al-Farazdaq, the Marwanids 'inherited the caliphate when the staff of Islam was broken';[40] an image on the transitional coinage may also evoke the staff as a symbol of God's covenant.[41] The seal-ring is a similarly ancient emblem with both practical and symbolic importance for royal authority, and so its early appearance is also unsurprising.[42] Cloaks and other items of clothing were also an essential badge of nobility and royalty.[43]

The 'torque' or 'collar' (*ṭawq*) is mentioned in some Umayyad texts, but this ancient emblem of royal authority (perhaps implying servitude to God) may be a literary image rather than a real element of caliphal insignia.[44] Other items of actual regalia associated with the caliph or his representatives include the conventional symbols of masculine authority and power, the sword, bow, spear and whip.[45] In the mosque the *minbar* and *miḥrāb* are closely associated with the ruler;[46] in the palace the throne in its niche has the same status. Beyond the mosque and the palace, the domed tent was also a long-standing symbol of Near Eastern royal authority, which is also mentioned in connection with the early caliphs.[47]

CONCLUSIONS

Ceremonial was an exercise in political communication: its meaning lay in the shared experience of those participating in it. At the Umayyad court, this meant primarily the Arabian–Muslim tribes and the Syrian–Arab nomads, as well as the various Romano-Syrian courtiers that gathered around the caliphs and delegations from elsewhere in the caliphate – the *ahl* and *nās* of the laconic literary accounts. Both the Ghassanids and the Lakhmid federations, which had dominated Syria and Mesopotamia before Islam, had been led by kings whose courts might be characterised as 'sub-Roman' and 'sub-Sasanian', respectively. Modern analysts of the architecture and iconography of the Marwanids have also tended

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to discuss both in terms of 'Roman' and 'Iranian' referents. The distinction has been followed here, but it is important to note the limitations of this typological approach. Through their conquests, the Arabian Muslims had gained access to the visual culture of both empires. Ruling from Syria, but with great commitment to maintaining control of Iraq and Iran, the Marwanids were able to draw on the two traditions in a highly eclectic fashion. Furthermore, the influence of each imperial visual tradition upon the other long pre-dated the Islamic period – perhaps in the highly contested terrain of Syro-Mesopotamia above all – and so the distinction can be somewhat artificial. Much of Marwanid iconography is a distinctive, Syro-Mesopotamian fusion of Roman and Iranian styles; the Marwanids deployed the resources of the defeated empires in new ways as they sought to develop a material and ceremonial expression of their legitimate authority as Muslim world-rulers.

However, a shift from west to east can perhaps be detected in the idiom of Umayyad rule. The early metropolitan architecture of the Marwanid court – the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque chief among them – reveal the importance of the Roman imperial heritage in the expression of caliphal authority in their post-Roman and post-Ghassanid Syrian heartlands at the turn of the seventh and eighth centuries. However, whereas the Muslims had conquered all the Sasanian empire, including its imperial metropolis in Iraq, they controlled only former provinces of the Roman empire. It has been suggested by Oleg Grabar that the later, ninth- and tenth-century literary evidence for the Marwanid court may reveal an increasingly Iranian inflection in the ceremonial of the later Marwanid court. Among the 'Iranian' features of the late Marwanid court, Grabar points to references to the use of a curtain to hide the ruler from the gaze of the court, to wine-drinking at audiences and to the silk clothing and the *qalansuwa* in the attire of the caliph and his delegates.[48] These possible changes in the material culture of the late Marwanid court may correspond with changes in the literary output of the caliphs' scribes. Under Hishām, the *dīwān al-rasāʾil*, or caliphal writing office, underwent great expansion, in which non-Arab, Mesopotamian scribes transformed the public articulation of caliphal authority in Arabic prose.

NOTES

1. On the origins and development of the mosque, see Johns, 'The "House of the Prophet"'.
2. Khal., 361 (*ustukhlafa*). Cf., however, Ṭab., ii, 576–8, where it is not clear that a second *bayʿa* took place after that nominating ʿAbd al-Malik as Marwān's successor earlier in the same year. See also Bal., iv/2, 470 = Bal.(D), vi, 300, for Damascus. Cf. Din., 294; Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 20; Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, 22ff.
3. Duri, 'Jerusalem', 110, citing al-Munajjid, *Muʿjam Banī Umayya*, 67, and al-Maqdisī, *Faḍāʾil*, 114, respectively.

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4. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 51.
5. Flood, *The Great Mosque*.
6. Sack, *Grosse Moschee*, 69ff.
7. *al-ahl*: Bal., iv/1, 144 = Bal.(D), iv, 165; Din., 366; Ṭab., ii, 1890. *Al-nās*: Bal. iv/1, 145 = Bal.(D), iv, 165; Bal., iv/1, 442 = Bal.(D), v, 26; Bal.(D), vii, 563; Yaq., ii, 257, 287, 307, 338; Din., 240, 319, 328, 332–3; Ṭab., ii, 1177–8; [Pseudo-] Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma*, ii, 270. Cf. Tyan, *Institutions*, i, 334.
8. Din., 294.
9. 684: Bal., iv/2, 11ff. = Bal.(D), v, 289ff.; Ṭab., ii, 467ff., 481–2; Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 19; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Mardj Rāhiṭ' (N. Eliséeff). 744: Ṭab., ii, 1789. Cf. Bal.(D), vii, 521ff. A connection between the two events is made in Bal.(D), vii, 527.
10. The *khuṭba* goes back to the earliest Islamic period: Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, ii, 251ff. Famous Marwanid accessional *khuṭba*s include ʿAbd al-Malik's *khuṭba* (Bal., iv/2, 486 = Bal.[D], vi, 312); al-Walīd I (Ṭab., ii, 1177–8; *ʿUyūn*, 2); ʿUmar I (Bal.[D], vii, 66–7); ʿUmar II (Bal.[D], vii, 66–7); Yazīd III (Khal., 365; Ibn Qutayba *ʿUyūn*, ii, 270–1; al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān*, ii, 142; Bal.[D], vii, 542–3; Ṭab., ii, 1834–5; *ʿUyūn*, 150). For allowance made for speeches at the *bayʿa*s to ʿUthmān and al-Ḥakam as *walī al-ʿahd*s in 743, see Ṭab., ii, 1755.
11. For Islamic funerary rites, see Zaman, 'Death'; Halevi, *Muhammad's Grave*.
12. e.g. Khal., 292, 309, 316, 322, *et al.* Cf. Halevi, *Muḥammad's Grave*, 27ff., 167ff.
13. [Pseudo-] Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma*, ii, 225.
14. e.g. the death of al-Walīd I: Bal.(D), vii, 35; Ṭab., ii, 1269–70, 1281. Al-Walīd b. Yazīd prayed over his father's body in Hishām's absence in 724: Yaq., ii, 377; Bal.(D), vii, 186, 311; Ṭab., ii, 1463, 1467. One of Hishām's sons prayed over his father's body in 743: Bal.(D), vii, 311; Ṭab., ii, 1730.
15. Ṭab., ii, 1875, and Yaq., ii, 414–15.
16. Silverstein, *Postal Systems*, 78. See also Far., i, 177, l. 26.
17. e.g. Ṭab., ii, 1178.
18. Ṭab., ii, 1177.
19. e.g. IAṬ, fos 116bff.; ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 274–5, 280. For an interesting exception in 743, see ibid., 297–9.
20. Silverstein, *Postal Systems*, 83.
21. e.g. Bal., iv/1, 351 = Bal.(D), iv, 389.
22. Day, '*Ṭirāz* silk'; Grohmann, *Arabische Paläographie*, ii, 8.
23. On these, see Grabar, 'Ceremonial and art', 176ff.; Grabar, *Formation*, esp. 153–4 and figs 80, 81; Fowden, *Quṣayr ʿAmra*, 115ff.
24. Miles, 'Miḥrāb and ʿAnazah', nos 4–5; Miles, 'Earliest Arab gold coinage', 212ff. Cf. Harper, 'Thrones and enthronement scenes', 63 and pl. IVc, d, e.
25. e.g. Ṭab, i, 2749.
26. Harper, *Silver Vessels*, 115–17, pl. 34.
27. Fowden, *Quṣayr ʿAmra*, 121–2.
28. Fowden, *Quṣayr ʿAmra*, 121–2.
29. See above, pp. 127–8.
30. Hamilton and Grabar, *Khirbat al-Mafjar*, 228–32, pls lv, nos 1, 5, cvii.
31. Grabar, 'Cérémonies', 55.
32. Athamina, 'Tribal kings', 22–3.
33. Cf. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Tādj' (W. Björkman). On the crowns of Rome, *ODB*, 'Crown' (M. McCormick); Dagron, *Emperor*, 54, n. 3, 61ff.; on Iran, *E.Ir.*, s.v. 'Coronation' (A. Shapur

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Sahbazi), 'Crown i. In the Median and Achaemenid periods; ii. From the Seleucids to the Islamic Conquest' (P. Calmeyer; E. H. Peck); on Aksum, Munro-Hay, *Aksum*, 151f.

34. Crone, *Political Thought*, 45–6.
35. See above, p. 137 and Ch. 5, n. 55, and (with the cloak), in a poem attributed to al-Walīd II: Mas., iv, §2238 (vi, 5). See also Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Munammaq*, 305; Bal.(D), ii, 187, vii, 10; Ṭab., i, 2815, 2935, 2982–3; *Agh.*, ix, 83, 84.
36. Cf. Genesis 38: 18 for the staff and seal given as a 'pledge', recalled by ᶜAbd al-Malik's use of the staff in giving an *amān*: Bal., iv/2, 283 = Bal.(D), vi, 149.
37. Lammens, *Moᶜâwia*, 59; Sauvaget, *La Mosquée*, 131; Grabar, 'Ceremonial and art', 58. For Roman and Persian staffs, see Christensen, *L'Iran*, 90; Dvornik, *Political Philosophy*, i, 110, 120; Dagron, *Emperor*, 84, 98, 216, 242.
38. See above, p. 70. Cf. Bal.(D), ii, 187, vii, 10; Ṭab, i, 2815, 2935, 2982–3.
39. Bal. iv/1, 155 = Bal.(D), iv, 175.
40. Far., i, 28.
41. Jamil, 'Caliph and *Quṭb*'.
42. For the 'seal' and 'pen' (*qalam*) as the regalia of al-Walīd I, see Far., i, 107. On the seal in Iran, see Shaked, 'From Iran to Islam', 85f. For Rome, see *ODB*, 'Seals and Sealings' (J. W. Nesbitt).
43. See Dagron, *Emperor*, 54–5, 61ff., 90f, 94; Gordon, *Robes* and *Honor*.
44. Ṭab., ii, 1177; ᶜAbbās, *ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 298. Cf. Ezekiel 16: 11.
45. All were ancient emblems of authority. For swords in Rome and Iran, see, e.g., Christensen, *L'Iran*, 398–9; Dagron, *Emperor*, 90. For the whip in Roman regalia, see Mundell Mango, 'Status and its symbols', 63. For the bow and spear in Iran, see Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, 14–16, 82, pl. I, 161, 231, pl. XXIII. For the spear in Rome, see MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 29, 189–90.
46. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Miḥrāb' (G. Fehérvári), 'Minbar' (J. Pedersen; J. Golmohammadi).
47. Esther 1: 6; Ṭab., i, 3289.
48. Grabar, 'Ceremonial and art', esp. 10, 15, 49ff., 71ff., *et passim*; Grabar, 'Cérémonies'.

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CHAPTER

8

WRITING AND THE *BAYᶜA* IN THE MARWANID PERIOD

During the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century CE, a senior administrator for the Egyptian Mamluks, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418), composed an authoritative, encyclopaedic manual for secretaries. The *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜshā fī ṣināᶜat al-inshāʾ* ('Daybreak for the Night-Blind regarding the Composition of Chancery Documents') comprises a vast collection of copies of state documents (the early twentieth-century edition runs to fourteen large volumes), together with discourses on the theory and practice of the scribe and secretary. Long before al-Qalqashandī's time, the *dīwān al-inshāʾ* ('chancery') had taken on a central importance in the administration of most Islamic states, but the scribes of the *dīwān*s were fully aware that it had not always been so. Men like al-Qalqashandī continued to preserve traditions about the origins and development of every aspect of the scribe's profession, including the production of documents for the pledge of allegiance to the caliph.

The introductory lines on the composition of pledges of allegiance to caliphs in the *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜshā* explain that documents were not composed for the *bayᶜa*s to the Companions of the Prophet who became caliphs in the first decades of Islam. In 694, when al-Ḥajjāj was appointed to govern Iraq, he established the formulaic oaths that became known as 'the oaths of the *bayᶜa*'; these oaths then remained in use under the Abbasids. This introduction is followed by a copy of an Abbasid formula for the oath of allegiance.[1] That is, al-Qalqashandī is confident that written oaths of allegiance were not composed in the seventh century and that the sytematisation of the oaths taken by the army took place under ᶜAbd al-Malik and al-Ḥajjāj (al-Qalqashandī uses the verb *rattaba*,'to put in order'). Furthermore, he knows that written pledges of allegiance were produced under the Abbasids, but the precise origins of such written texts for the *bayᶜa* are obscure to him.

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Al-Qalqashandī claims to have better evidence for the written covenant for the succession to the caliphate (*ʿahd*): he sees Abū Bakr's nomination of ʿUmar I in 634 as a precedent, which was followed in 717 by Sulaymān in nominating ʿUmar II. However, the parallelism between the two ʿUmars give cause to be a little suspicious of this account. Furthermore, the version of Sulaymān's covenant that al-Qalqashandī reproduces is very obviously a later fiction; if Sulaymān or his courtiers did write such a text, it was not the one cited by al-Qalqashandī (a much shorter version was unknown to him). Al-Qalqashandī makes no mention of the copies of documents for the succession to al-Walīd II (r. 743–4) that are found in the *History* of al-Ṭabarī (d. 923); all his subsequent examples of such texts are Abbasid.[2]

The best way to test such later accounts of the development of literate administration in the caliphate would be to compare them with the surviving documentary evidence. Some tax documents and other records of provincial administration survive from the mid-seventh century and after. The vast majority of these come from Egypt, where the coincidence of the use of papyrus and consistently arid conditions has preserved documentary material; others have been found in Palestine and Afghanistan.[3] This primary evidence suggests that there was already a degree of uniformity in some aspects of the administration of the caliphate by the early eighth century. However, no documents pertaining to the appointment of the caliph himself have yet been discovered, nor does it seem very likely that they will be. In the absence of any external corroboration or control from genuinely documentary evidence, the tradition has to be judged on its own, internal evidence.[4]

At least seven purported copies of documents from the Marwanid period that relate directly to the pledge of allegiance to the caliph, or to his successors, appear in the ninth- and early tenth-century tradition. Most have already been mentioned in passing:

1a. The document nominating ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik as successors on the death of Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Malik in 99/717. (As noted above, a very different and far longer version of a document relating to the same occasion is also extant; its length, form and content are all so different as to make it worth considering as a separate text, '1b'.)
2. The reply of Marwān b. Muḥammad, governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan, regarding the accession of al-Walīd II in 125/743.
3. The letter of Yūsuf b. ʿUmar, governor of Iraq, to Naṣr b. Sayyār, governor of Khurasan, regarding the organisation of the pledge of allegiance to al-Ḥakam and ʿUthmān, the sons of al-Walīd II in 125/743.
4. The text of the pledge of allegiance to be taken to al-Walīd II, al-Ḥakam and ʿUthmān b. al-Walīd as successors to al-Walīd II in 125/743.

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5. The letter of al-Walīd II, appointing his sons al-Ḥakam and ᶜUthmān as his successors in 125/743.
6. The letter of Yazīd III to the people of Iraq regarding his sending Manṣūr b. Jumhūr to take the *bayᶜa* on his accession in 126/744.
7. The letter of Yazīd III to Marwān b. Muḥammad, governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan, regarding Marwān's hesitation in responding to his call for allegiance in 126/744.

The seven 'documents' present two main problems if they are to be used as evidence of the use of writing in the late Marwanid *bayᶜa*. First, to what extent, if any, are they accurate copies of genuine Marwanid documents? Second, how far are they representative of the use of writing at Marwanid ceremonies of accession and succession? The answer to the first question is a qualified positive: at least some of the documents appear to reflect practices current in the mid-to-late Marwanid *dīwān al-rasāʾil* ('bureau of state letters', 'chancery'). In the current state of our knowledge, the second question is harder to answer. However, although the selection of the documents in the extant sources appears to be a function of concerns other than the accurate representation of the history of chancery practice (there is an obvious focus on the constitutional crisis of 743–4), it does appear that the 730s–40s did in fact witness a change in the use of writing in caliphal communication with the provinces.

TRANSMISSION

Of the seven documents, three ('2', '5' and '6') are reproduced by al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), on the authority of the prolific ninth-century compiler of historical material, ᶜAlī b. Muḥammad al-Madāʾinī (d. *c*. 830–50), via Aḥmad b. Zuhayr (d. 892).[5] Variants of '2' and '6' are also reproduced by al-Balādhurī (d. 892), who cites al-Madāʾinī directly for '2' and gives only *qīla*, 'it is said', for '6'.[6] The anonymous author of the much later *Kitāb al-ᶜUyūn* (probably *c*. eleventh century) also cites al-Madāʾinī for his version of '2' and for a one-line reference to '6'.[7] Al-Madāʾinī's accounts of the crisis of 743–4 go back to figures such as the Abbasid ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜAlī (d. 764), the late Marwanid scribe Sālim Abū al-ᶜAlāʾ (d. *c*. 744), and a son of the scribe ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd (d. *c*. 750).[8] They may have been his ultimate sources; it is also possible al-Madāʾinī had access to a local collection of Iraqi versions of documents.[9]

The letter from the governor of Iraq to his sub-governor in Khurasan regarding the pledge of allegiance to al-Walīd II's successors in 743 (3) and the actual text of that pledge of allegiance (4) – both found only in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* – might

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also be ascribed to al-Madāʾinī. They appear just before al-Walīd II's letter ('5'), which is clearly ascribed to al-Madāʾinī, and are said to have accompanied a copy of it to Khurasan. Like al-Walīd II's letter, they are unique to al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*. However, al-Ṭabarī is unclear about his sources here: it is possible that the governor's letter and the text of the pledge ('3' and '4') have an (unnamed) origin different from the letter itself ('5').[10]

The text drawn up for the succession to Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Malik in 717 is extant in two very different versions ('1a' and '1b'). A very long version ('1b') is first found in the anonymous history from al-Andalus, the *Kitāb al-Imāma wa'l-siyāsa* ('The Book of Religious and Political Authority', *c*. mid-tenth century). In printed editions it runs to three pages of text, as opposed to the five lines of the shorter version ('1a'). Very similar copies of the much shorter version are found in the late ninth-century recensions of the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Saʿd (d. 845),[11] the *Taʾrīkh* of al-Yaʿqūbī (d. *c*. 905), the *Taʾrīkh* of al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) and the anonymous *Kitāb al-ʿUyūn* (*c*. eleventh century). All appear to derive their account from Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Wāqidī (d. 823).[12] Al-Wāqidī was a resident of Baghdad and served as a judge there in the early ninth century. He was a prolific compiler of legal and historical material, including many historical documents.[13] Al-Wāqidī himself refers ultimately to the purported eyewitness of Rajāʾ b. Ḥaywa al-Kindī (d. 730), the *éminence grise* of the early Marwanid caliphate, who is said to have claimed to have been present when the document was composed on Sulaymān's deathbed.

The final extant copy of a document is a letter – or a fragment of one – sent to Marwān b. Muḥammad by Yazīd III in 744 ('7'). Marwān b. Muḥammad, governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan, initially marched against the usurper Yazīd III, but then offered his oath after his position in Armenia was guaranteed.[14] The letter occurs in Ibn Qutayba's (d. 889) *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* ('Choicest of the Reports'), in the as yet unpublished portion of the *Kitāb al-Manẓūm wa'l-manthūr* ('The Book of Poetry and Prose') by the Baghdadi bookseller and private scholar Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (d. 893) and in the *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd* ('Book of the Exquisite Necklace') by the Cordoban Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi (d. 940);[15] variants occur in later sources.[16] In Ibn Qutayba's version, it reads:

> To begin: I see that you put forward one foot for the oath of allegiance, while you hold back the other. So, when this letter of mine comes to you stand upon whichever of the two you will. Peace.[17]

Only Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi gives a source. He cites Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ (d. 854), but the document does not appear in any editions of Khalīfa's extant works.[18]

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VARIANTS

The *Kitāb al-Imāma*'s long version of the covenant for the succession of Sulaymān ('1b') has an anachronistic style and content that show it to be a spurious ninth- or tenth-century composition.[19] None of the other seven texts shows such dramatic divergence in its extant variants. Three are unique to al-Ṭabarī's *History* ('3', '4' and '5'), and so it is impossible to tell how far transmission from supposed original to extant version has led to alterations in the text. However, '1a', '2', '6' and '7' are extant in variant versions. The shorter of these ('1a' and '7') appear to have been transmitted fairly accurately. Small changes introduced by copyists would explain the minor variations in the letter of Yazīd III to Marwān ('7', translated above), as would those in Sulaymān's succession document ('1a'):

> In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful:[20] This is a document from the Servant of God, Sulaymān, the Commander of the Faithful, [the son of ᶜAbd al-Malik][21] for ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz, that I have appointed you [him][22] to (*wal-laytuka*) the caliphate after me, and after you [him],[23] Yazīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik.[24] So [let the faithful][25] hear him[26] and obey, fear God and do not fall into disagreement, lest (your enemy) is emboldened against you (*wa-lā takhtalifu fa-yuṭmaᶜa fīkum*).[27]

Only in Ibn Saᶜd's version are the successors addressed in the third person. In the light of al-Qalqashandī's remark that the Umayyads wrote letters (*kutub*) in the second person, we might conclude that Ibn Saᶜd 'corrected' his master's work.[28] Al-Yaᶜqūbī's version is quite abbreviated: the *basmala*, the concluding phrase 'lest your enemy is emboldened against you' and any mention of Yazīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik are omitted. In the *Kitāb al-ᶜUyūn* 'the faithful' (*al-muʾminūn*) appears to have been added to explain to whom the concluding exhortation is addressed. There is every reason to think that all four extant versions are derived from al-Wāqidī (d. 823).

The longer letters of Marwān and Yazīd III present a slightly more complex picture ('2' and '6'). Both are extant in two main versions: in al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-ashrāf* and al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* (where the different extant manuscripts reveal very small variations within al-Ṭabarī's version, too).[29] In both cases, al-Ṭabarī's version of the letters (via Aḥmad b. Zuhayr) is about a third longer than al-Balādhurī's. The differences between al-Balādhurī's and al-Ṭabarī's versions of Marwān's letter ('2') are relatively unimportant: generally, the *Ansāb* is simply terser. Substantive omissions include a line on al-Walīd II's allotted reign being named in previous revealed books (*sābiq al-zubur*), mention of the 'two swords readied for people of treachery' (*ahl al-ghishsh*) and the words of those

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assembled before Marwān for the *bayᶜa*. ('No other appointment of a caliph has reached us that has made us more hopeful, nor more happy, than the accession of the Commander of the Faithful'.) The concluding lines of the *Ansāb* omit mention of Marwān's preoccupation with defence of the frontier preventing him travelling to see al-Walīd. The impression is that al-Madāʾinī has been either expanded or abbreviated, or both, but that he is indeed the source for both texts.

Yazīd III's letter ('6') is also about 30 per cent longer in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* than in al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb*. However, whereas in the case of '2' the divergences are most likely associated with the transmission of the early ninth-century works of al-Madāʾinī to his final compilers some decades later, rather than with early parallel versions of the same text (as the variants of '1a' all appear to derive from versions of al-Wāqidī's work), there is some doubt as to whether al-Balādhurī was relying on al-Madāʾinī for '6'.[30] Thus, the two extant variant versions may go back to two divergent texts already circulating at the beginning of the ninth century.

These doubts are compounded by important differences between the two versions. Both share the same overall structure:[31] a historical prologue sets out the role of the caliphs as God's representatives on earth, protected by Him and to be obeyed; it is followed by a denunciation of al-Walīd II's misdeeds; Yazīd III called on al-Walīd II to change, but he did not; Yazīd III found an army also angered by al-Walīd II; having called for, and been refused, consultation (*shūrā*) regarding the caliphate, they killed al-Walīd II; the people are then called upon to recognise Yazīd III's appointee over Iraq, Manṣūr b. Jumhur, and obey him. However, beyond these structural parallels (albeit with many divergences of language and phrasing), there are two particularly substantial variations in content. First, al-Ṭabarī's version includes a longer denunciation of al-Walīd's misdeeds, and, second and more notable, al-Ṭabarī's version concludes:

> So . . . follow (*tābiᶜū*) Manṣūr b. Jumhūr, with whom I am satisfied for you, on the understanding that the covenant (*ᶜahd*) of God and His compact (*mīthāq*) and the mightiest of what has been covenanted and made binding (*ᶜuqida*) on any one of His creation are upon you. So you *will* hear me and *will* obey me and whoever I may make caliph after me from those upon whom the community agrees. The same as this is upon me toward you: I *shall* act among you in accordance with the command of God and the *sunna* of His Prophet – may God bless him and grant him salvation – and I shall follow the way of the best of those who have gone before you. We ask God, our Lord and Master, for the best of His granting of success and the best of His decree.[32]

In al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb* the conclusion is quite different:

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> So give the pledge of allegiance (*bāyiᶜū*) to Manṣūr b. Jumhūr for the Commander of the Faithful, with whom I am satisfied for you, and whom I have appointed to your government (*amr*). For indeed, equity is spread out for you, nothing being contrary to it for the caliphate, if God wills. We ask God our Lord and Master for excellence from His granting agreement and His guidance. It was written with two nights lacking or remaining from Rajab in the year one hundred and twenty-six.[33]

Much of the latter is found somewhere in al-Ṭabarī's version (although the use of the verb *bāyaᶜa* and the date are both absent in his version). On the other hand, al-Ṭabarī's concluding material about reciprocal obligation is completely absent from al-Balādhurī's text. The verb *bāyaᶜa* / *tābaᶜa* could easily be a copyist's mistake in one version or the other (in unpointed Arabic the two words are identical).[34] The absence of the date in al-Ṭabarī's version is similarly inconsequential. However, the prolonged discussion of the covenant and the reciprocal expression of the terms of the oath – where the caliph is explicitly bound by the same covenant as his subjects – are striking absences, and proof of important modification of any original in either or both extant versions.

The differences between the variants of the extant letters of Marwān and Yazīd III ('2' and '6') are useful indications of the kind of changes that a supposed document tends to undergo in its transmission.[35] In both cases, a common original text is the most likely explanation of the very close similarities between the versions. In the case of Marwān's letter ('2') this is almost all that can be said; one might tentatively propose that al-Ṭabarī's version reflects elaboration of a shorter original. Yazīd III's letter to Iraq ('6') has undergone much more significant changes, and here it does seem likely that al-Ṭabarī's version has been expanded by one of its earlier transmitters, or by al-Ṭabarī himself.[36] In particular, the longer version of the last paragraph echoes slightly later, Abbasid texts in its lengthy discussion of the covenant (on which, see below, Chapter 12), and its representation of the reciprocal obligations of the caliph is perhaps intended to be compared with letters of al-Walīd II, the tyrant who claims unilateral appointment by God.[37]

AUTHENTICITY

In every case, the *isnād*s and variants take us back to compilers working at the beginning of the ninth century: al-Wāqidī (d. 823), al-Madāʾinī (d. *c*. 830–50) and perhaps also al-Haytham b. ᶜAdī (d. 821–4) and Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ (d. 854). Beyond them, only '1a' has a clear early authority (Rajāʾ b. Ḥaywa, who is consistently reported as the source of the document). Where more than one version of

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a text is extant, the variants indicate the kinds of changes that a document might undergo in copying and transmission. This raises doubts about the *unica* ('3', '4' and '5'). However, at such a remove from the originals, real certainty about the authenticity of any single text is impossible: there are too many unknown variables. Thus, although neither the variants nor the *isnād*s indict any text apart from '1b', the seven texts should be viewed as a *corpus* of texts on the basis of their distinctive formulaic features and lexicon.

That the texts form such a corpus in itself suggests that they reflect authentic mid-to-late Marwanid chancery practice – forgeries, or texts that had been very substantially modified, would most likely not display such consistency (the verbose and anachronistic '1b' is a case in point, as are doubts over one version of the conclusion to '6'). Furthermore, these texts anticipate, and yet differ quite significantly from, copies of early Abbasid documents composed for similar purposes in the 750s and after. The Abbasid legal formulas are much fuller and more elaborate, and both these and their other letters have a distinctive lexicon that dates them to after 750.

That the *corpus* does not look out of place alongside other purported products of the late Marwanid *dīwān al-rasāʾil* is also reassuring. The fifty or so extant letters and fragments of letters by the Marwanid scribe ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (d. *c*. 750) have been the subject of some modern scrutiny and have been judged likely to be largely authentic.[38] ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd served as a senior secretary in the *dīwān* of Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik and was the scribe of Marwān b. Muḥammad, Hishām's governor in Armenia, before becoming Marwān's *ṣāḥib dīwān al-rasāʾil* ('head of the chancery') on his accession in 744. (Thus, if authentic, the letter from Marwān ['2'] is likely to have been composed by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd.[39]) ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd was the pupil and son-in-law of Sālim Abū al-ʿAlāʾ, who had been head of the *dīwān al-rasāʾil* of Hishām (r. 724–43) and al-Walīd II (r. 743–4). (Although its attribution is contested, al-Walīd II's letter to the provinces ['5'] has been counted among Sālim's letters by one leading authority on these texts.[40]) Scattered across the later tradition and yet sharing various stylistic features, many of the works attributed to ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and Sālim are very likely genuine late Marwanid letters. Furthermore, the longer pieces would not have been easy to invent *ex nihilo* – their style is both elaborate and distinctive, whilst their content expresses a political theory different from that found in Abbasid texts.[41] This might indicate particularly good reason to assume an original behind the three longer letters ('2', '5' and '6') relating to the *bayʿa*, which resemble them in both style and content.

For example, the letter of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd on 'obedience' (*al-ṭāʿa*) shares a number of features with these texts.[42] Like both '5' and '6' (the letters of al-Walīd II and Yazīd III) it begins with a 'mission topos', which traces the history of Islam

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through the pre-Islamic prophets down to the time of Muḥammad, before it turns to the theme of 'obedience' (*al-ṭāᶜa*):

> Whomever God desires to guide on the right path, to help and enlighten as to his good fortune, He causes to cleave to obedience (*alzama al-ṭāᶜa*), such that he understands the obligation (to obey) and what God has stipulated within obedience – freedom of action, refuge and escape, he deems it wise and persists in it, and is among the people (of obedience) and carries out what God has made obligatory for the possessors of (obedience). By that he saves his soul, and by it he preserves his religion and receives in reward for it the best things which he desires from the blessings of his Lord (*thawāb rabbihi*), not fearing anything else in the temporal world, but anticipating the punishments (*niqam*) and awaiting the calamities (*qawāriᶜ*) which are made permissible for the people of rebellion (*ahl al-maᶜṣiya*), resistance and separation . . . [43]

Reading *alzama* for *lazima*; the syntax of the Arabic is not clear at this point. In al-Walīd II's letter ('5'):

> Obedience is the head of this matter, its summit, its apex, its halter, its foundation, its refuge (*ᶜiṣma*) and its mainstay, after the declaration of belief in the unity of God with which God has distinguished between His believers. Through obedience the successful attain their stations from God and gain the right to reward (*thawābahum*) from Him; and through disobedience (*al-maᶜṣiya*) others obtain those of His punishments (*naqamāt*) which He metes out to them, that chastisement of His which He inflicts upon them, and that anger of His which He inflicts upon them . . . So adhere to obedience to God (*fa'lzamū ṭāᶜata'llāh*) whatever may befall, come to you or happen to you. Be sincere in it, hold to it, hasten to it . . . Moreover, you have been informed of what the people of disobedience (*ahl al-maᶜṣiya*) have incurred in the way of reproach and restriction, to the point that their affairs have come to ruin, ignominy, humiliation and perdition . . .[44]

The parallels of theme, style, lexicon and conceptual framework are particularly clear in these passages. Indeed, that the caliphs are the rightful representatives of God's covenant on earth, to whom obedience is owed by believers, is a recurrent theme of all the texts.[45]

Texts '1a', '3', '4' and '7' are too short for this argument from parallels with the rest of the late Marwanid corpus to apply. However, their terse style is quite different from copies of later Abbasid documents: if they are forgeries, they are convincing ones. The most likely contexts for the invention of '1a' would be around, or soon after, the time of its purported composition, in order to legitimate the unusual

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succession arrangements made on the death of Sulaymān, or in early Abbasid times, with the development of the image of ᶜUmar II as the 'good Umayyad'; thus, if it is a forgery, it is most likely a Marwanid, or very early Abbasid, one. There are no features in '3' and '4' to indict them; the names mentioned in '3' are plausible; '4' shows some similarity to '1a'. As for '7', it is too unusual to be easily judged – as noted above, if it is authentic, it is a fragment of a longer text.

The function of writing in late Marwanid accession and succession

Concluding that genuine mid-to-late Marwanid documents lie behind much of what survives of them in the ninth- and tenth-century tradition is quite different from concluding that the survivals are *representative* evidence of Marwanid chancery documents promulgating the pledge of allegiance. In reading sources like al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb* and al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*, it is clear that we confront a conflation of agendas: the intention, and selection (even emendations?), of the final compiler, and, behind them, all the editorial decisions of earlier compilers: in this case, Aḥmad b. Zuhayr, al-Madāʾinī and al-Wāqidī (and perhaps others) and beyond them the murky sixty years or so that separates these authors from purported original texts.[46]

It is particularly notable that, while treaty documents are arguably among the earliest extant Arabic prose texts, there is no extant text associated with the pledge of allegiance to the caliph or his successor for the eighty-three years between Abū Bakr's *ᶜahd* for ᶜUmar I in 634 and the isolated five-line *ᶜahd* of Sulaymān for (uncannily!) ᶜUmar II, in 717. Then there is a further twenty-six-year hiatus until 743–4, when all the remaining six examples of Marwanid prose connected with the pledge of allegiance are said to have been composed. However, despite the very obvious focus on the events of 743–4, the surviving *bayᶜa* documents probably do reflect a genuine change in the use of writing in the public promulgation of authority in the later Marwanid caliphate. Elsewhere in his *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜshā*, al-Qalqashandī remarks that ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd, secretary of Marwān II, 'lengthened letters and was verbose (in composing) them' (*aṭāla al-kutub wa-aṭnaba fīhā*) and that this continued after him.[47] The change identified by al-Qalqashandī has also caught the attention of modern scholars, who have proposed a shift in the meaning of the term *risāla* from (oral) 'message' to (written) 'letter' during the eighth century.[48] It seems likely that the production of longer documents for the promulgation of the pledge of allegiance to the caliph or his successors began in the latter decades of the Marwanid caliphate, under Hishām (r. 724–43) and his successors.

Besides the background of a growing use of writing in Arabic–Islamic culture during the eighth century,[49] three interrelated causes can be identified

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behind this late Marwanid shift towards the greater use of writing at the *bayᶜa* ceremony. First, the crisis of authority within the Marwanid family at the end of the caliphate of Hishām seems to have led to innovation in the public expression of caliphal legitimacy. Second, this crisis among the ruling elite took place in a context of a rapidly changing wider religio-political culture, where challengers to Umayyad legitimacy expressed themselves in new literary forms: the Marwanids needed to engage both Marwanid supporters and those more easily swayed by the arguments of their rivals. Finally, the form that the documents took was also determined by the ongoing reorganisation of the administration of the caliphate. Under Hishām, the employment of non-Arabians from Iraq in senior positions in the *dīwān al-rasāʾil* began to influence the output and function of the *dīwān*. In order to address the first and second of these causes in more detail, it is necessary to establish for what, precisely, writing was used at the pledge of allegiance: what does the form of the texts suggest about their function and the milieu in which later Marwanid propaganda was disseminated? With respect to the third, it is necessary to reconstruct the background of those who brought these texts into existence.

FORM AND FUNCTION

Kitāb is the word that describes the seven documents in all the sources; it is also the word used in most of the documents themselves. However, *kitāb*'s meaning is varied: 'writing', 'text', 'document', 'letter' or 'contract' would all be valid English translations, among others. In fact, it is clear that the texts can be classified more precisely, and would also have been understood to belong to different categories by those who wrote, heard or read them.

Of the seven texts, three are not so far from 'letters' in the usual modern English sense: '2' is the letter of the governor Marwān b. Muḥammad to al-Walīd II acknowledging the latter's accession and conveying the pledge of allegiance of Marwān's followers; '3' is a short letter written by the governor of Iraq to his sub-governor in Khurasan to accompany the texts for the *bayᶜa* to al-Walīd II's heirs, which gives instructions on how to arrange the pledge of allegiance; '7' appears to be a fragment of a letter from Yazīd III to Marwān enquiring about his allegiance after the coup in 744. For all that they deal with public affairs of state, all three are addressed to individuals – if they had a wider audience it was presumably only at the court of a governor or caliph.

In contrast, the other four texts are truly public documents, intended for oral delivery to larger audiences. Sulaymān's nomination of his successors in 717 ('1a'), is an *ᶜahd* ('covenant', 'commission'). That is, it is a written text nominating an official, or officials – in this case, the caliph's two successors. This is

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a function that it shares with '5', al-Walīd II's nomination of his sons as successors in 743, which is thus also in some senses an *ᶜahd* ('covenant') – a word it uses to describe itself.[50] However, whereas in '1a' Sulaymān addresses first his designated successor, ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz, and then the Muslims in general, in '5' al-Walīd II addresses the Muslims in general from the outset; furthermore, al-Walīd II's letter is more than twenty times longer than Sulaymān's – something that places it in a somewhat different category. Whereas '1a' seems to have been intended to be read only to the Umayyad house (*ahl al-bayt*), gathered at Dābiq in 717,[51] '5' was a letter for public performance in the provinces of Iraq and Khurasan. It was to be read out from the pulpit of the mosque by the governor, and, as such, it resembles, both in length and in some aspects of structure and style, '6', Yazīd III's letter to Iraq following his coup in 744, which was also intended for public performance in the mosques of Iraq. Thus, '5' and '6' might also be called *risālatān* – 'public letters', 'epistles', or 'pulpit manifestos'; that is, they are works of public communication and propaganda for public performance.[52]

Al-Walīd II's letter ('5') is also unusual in that al-Ṭabarī records the letter of the governor of Iraq that accompanied it to Khurasan ('3'):

> And in this year (125/743), al-Walīd b. Yazīd contracted the oath of allegiance to his two sons, al-Ḥakam and ᶜUthmān, after himself (*ᶜaqada li- . . . al-bayᶜa min baᶜdihi*). He made them both successors to his covenant (*waliyyay ᶜahdihi*), one of them after the other, and put al-Ḥakam ahead of ᶜUthmān. He wrote about that to the garrisons. Among those to whom he wrote was Yūsuf b. ᶜUmar, at that time al-Walīd's governor in Iraq (*ᶜāmil . . . ᶜalā al-ᶜIrāq*). Yūsuf wrote about that to Naṣr b. Sayyār (his sub-governor of Khurasan). A copy of the letter to him was: 'In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful: From Yūsuf b. ᶜUmar to Naṣr b. Sayyār. To begin: I have sent to you a copy of the letter of the Commander of the Faithful with ᶜAqqāl b. Shabba al-Tamīmī and ᶜAbd al-Malik al-Qaynī.[53]
>
> (It is a letter) which he wrote to those under my authority and which appointed al-Ḥakam, the son of the Commander of the Faithful and ᶜUthmān, the son of the Commander of the Faithful, to the covenant after him. I have given them both verbal orders about that, so when they reach you, gather the people for the reading of the letter of the Commander of the Faithful, command them to gather for it and lead them in what the Commander of the Faithful has written. When you have finished, carry out the reading out of the letter and permit whoever wants to make a speech (*khuṭba*), then take the oath of allegiance to them both in the name of God and his blessing and impose upon them (*khudh ᶜalayhim*) the covenants which I have copied for you at the end of this letter of mine, which the Commander of the Faithful copied for us in his letter ('4', translated below). Explain it and take the

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> oath of allegiance upon it. We ask God to bless the Commander of the Faithful and His flock in whatever He has decreed for them through the words of the Commander of the Faithful and that He set al-Ḥakam and ᶜUthmān on the right path and bless us through them. Peace be upon you.'[54]

Although the sources refer to writing to 'the garrisons' (*al-amṣār*) or 'the provinces' (*al-āfāq*) about the *bayᶜa* almost from the beginning of the caliphate in the mid-seventh century,[55] these are the first extant texts said to have been written for this purpose. Al-Walīd II's letters are to be read aloud as part of a public ceremony (presumably at the congregational mosque at Marw in Khurasan). Yūsuf b. ᶜUmar has sent ᶜAqqāl b. Shabba, a specialist *khaṭīb*, or public speaker, as one of his two messengers to Naṣr b. Sayyār;[56] perhaps he was to advise on the ceremony, or even to perform the reading of the caliph's letter. That Yūsuf writes *qum bi-qarāʾat al-kitāb* ('carry out [or 'organise'] the reading out of the letter') suggests that this might have been the case. (The other messenger, ᶜAbd al-Malik b. Nuᶜaym al-Qaynī, is more obscure – most likely he was an official of the public post [*barīd*] that usually delivered such messages.[57]) The documents themselves served to promote uniformity in the promulgation of Marwanid authority: al-Ṭabarī says that al-Walīd wrote to the garrison cities about the succession and that this is just one set of letters sent to Iraq and Khurasan. They are almost sermons by proxy.[58]

As the accompanying instructions indicate, al-Walīd II's letter ('5') cannot really be separated from the much shorter text that immediately precedes it ('4'), which was to be read out on the same occasion and constituted the terms of the pledge to his two successors (in later terminology, the *kitāb al-bayᶜa*). In the case of Yazīd III's letter to the provinces ('6'), this material about the actual pledge is incorporated into its concluding passages. Thus, Yazīd III's letter unites the propaganda purposes of a public speech about the legitimacy of the accession with the terms of the pledge of allegiance to be taken on his behalf by his governor. However, both documents ('5' and '6') are characteristic of the genre of public documents for oral delivery from the minbar. They are rhetorical texts, gaining their effect from a dense, repetitive prose style,[59] in part inspired by the Arabian rhetorical style of the *khuṭba* ('public speech', 'sermon'), which would have gained its force from oral delivery by an eloquent performer.[60]

While some of the roots of the *khuṭba* lay in pre-Islamic Arabian custom, and long and elaborate sermons are attributed to some early figures in Islam, the use of long, written texts in public discourse seems to have developed only during the eighth century. Modern scholars have recognised the 'religious epistle' as a type of early Islamic literature for more than thirty years.[61] 'Religious epistles'

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are prose texts written by advocates of particular sectarian (and hence also legal and political) stances. Although a consensus has yet to be reached on the authenticity of the earliest examples, there is no doubt that by the mid-eighth century a corpus of such texts with sufficient shared features to be called a genre had come into existence. Both the two caliphal letters of 743–4 can be interpreted in these generic terms, in that they share a number of stylistic features with contemporaneous documents produced without state sanction; in some respects, they can be read as a variation on a genre of mid-eighth-century texts that emanated from groups in opposition to the caliphs.[62]

The most striking feature that the caliphal letters share with many of the 'religious epistles' is what has been described by Michael Cook as the 'mission topos': a survey of 'sacred history', beginning with God's choosing Islam as His religion, describing the early prophets sent to Humanity and then moving to God's sending Muḥammad. In their treatment of the subsequent period of the caliphate, the various letters diverge in content: opponents of the Umayyads presented them as illegitimate and argued for their own doctrinal stance. However, all retain structural similarities: they set out their stance regarding the legitimacy – or otherwise – of the successors of the Prophet. That sectarian sermons from the same period sometimes also follow a very similar pattern indicates the blurred distinction between *kitāb* ('writing', 'letter', 'epistle') and *khuṭba* ('sermon', 'public speech').[63]

The opening discussion of prophetic history has been described as 'banal', on the basis that the audiences for such texts were Muslims, and perhaps sectarian sympathisers with the speaker at that.[64] Banal it may have been (though it was intended for an audience inhabiting a 'sectarian milieu', where non-Muslim monotheists were a large majority); nonetheless, we should take the rhetorical effect of the mission topos seriously: beginning an oration with 'banalities' might have allowed one's audience to become attuned before the core content of speech was delivered. Furthermore, the assertions about God, Islam and the prophets established an 'Islamic' common ground for the whole audience, before attempts to persuade them of more contentious doctrine began.[65]

Whereas the 'religious epistles' and speeches of the Kharijite opponents of the later Marwanids denigrate Umayyad legitimacy, al-Walīd II's and Yazīd III's letters promote it assertively; in Cannadine's memorable formula, they seek 'to make alternative and subversive modes of thought seem off-limits and even unthinkable'.[66] As Crone and Hinds put it in their discussion of al-Walīd II's letter: 'the style is involved and overloaded . . . those who heard the letter read aloud must have frequently lost the thread; on the other hand, they must have felt that the overall message was being positively hammered into them; obedience will be amply rewarded, whereas disobedience and dissension have

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dire consequences in this world and the next.'[67] Yazīd III's letter is less dense and iterative, but follows a similar structure in so far as it begins with a very abbreviated version of the mission topos – skipping straight from God's choice of Islam to His establishment of His caliphate – before asserting the legitimacy of every caliph save al-Walīd II, whom Yazīd III has just deposed and killed, and whose impious failings are set out (at greater length in al-Ṭabarī's version than al-Balādhurī's). Finally, the letter urges obedience to Yazīd III, in explicitly reciprocal and conditional terms in al-Ṭabarī's text, and in more conventionally autocratic ones in al-Balādhurī's.

The role of the caliphal bureaucracy in the crisis of Marwanid authority

In the latter decades of the Marwanid period, such texts were the public voice of the caliph, delivered to his flock by his provincial emirs and their spokesmen – *khuṭba*s by proxy. As discussed in Chapter 7, the sending of messages to the provinces via the *barīd* ('postal service', 'intelligence service') was a very early feature of the administration of the caliphate, and one that was crucial to promulgating both the accession of a new caliph and the nomination of his official successors. In this, the officers of the *barīd* appear to have worked closely with the scribes of the *dīwān al-rasāʾil*, the 'chancery' or 'bureau of state letters'. (Indeed, that a *dīwān al-barīd* is unmentioned in the Umayyad period suggests that the caliphal post may have come under the jurisdiction of the head of the *dīwān al-rasāʾil*.[68]) The caliph's public words were the literary product of specialist advisers and administrators, who brought into the caliphal administration the political traditions of Roman and Iranian Syria, Mesopotamia and Iraq.

The later tradition preserves relatively full accounts of the crisis of the Marwanid caliphate in 743–4, which gives some indication of the role of these administrators in late Umayyad politics and permits the reconstruction of some of the circumstances of six of the seven extant copies of Marwanid *bayᶜa* documents. The crisis of 743–4 had four important stages: al-Walīd II's accession on the death of his uncle, and enemy, Hishām, in 743; al-Walīd II's attempt later that year to secure the succession for his sons; Yazīd III's successful rebellion against al-Walīd II in 744; and Marwān II's defeat of Yazīd III, also in 744.

According to the extant ninth- and tenth-century sources, Hishām b. ᶜAbd al-Malik died at his palace at al-Ruṣāfa in northern Syria, in 743, after a reign of nearly twenty years. Sālim b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Abū al-ᶜAlāʾ, his long-serving *ṣāhib dīwān al-rasāʾil*, took responsibility for announcing the caliph's death and used the officers of the *barīd*, the caliphal 'courier service', to convey the news (and perhaps also the caliphal insignia) to Hishām's exiled successor, al-Walīd II,

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at al-Azraq, in Jordan. The messenger also informed al-Walīd II that his personal secretary, ᶜIyāḍ b. Muslim, who had been imprisoned at al-Ruṣāfa under Hishām, had been released and had succeeded in securing the stores and the treasuries. A letter sent ahead from al-Azraq by al-Walīd II had his uncle and close ally, al-ᶜAbbās b. al-Walīd, arrest many of Hishām's entourage.[69] Indeed, almost all the officials of Hishām were dismissed (and many were tortured), except in the *dīwān al-rasāʾil*, where Sālim Abū al-ᶜAlā, and then ᶜAbd Allāh b. Sālim, his son, served al-Walīd II as they had Hishām.[70]

At least part of the explanation for Sālim and ᶜAbd Allāh's escaping the purges probably lies in their close links with important Marwanid allies of the new caliph. Sālim was a non-Arab client (*mawlā*) of Saᶜīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik,[71] most likely from Iraq, and the teacher, mentor and father-in-law of ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā, also an Iraqi *mawlā* and the personal secretary of Marwān b. Muḥammad; like al-ᶜAbbās b. al-Walīd, both Saᶜīd and Marwān were very senior scions of the Marwanid family by non-Arab mothers and influential supporters of al-Walīd II's caliphate.[72] Whether or not Sālim actually wrote al-Walīd II's letter to the provinces on the nomination of his sons as successors ('5') later in 743, it is very likely that, as *ṣāḥib dīwān al-rasāʾil*, he or his son was ultimately responsible for the production of this text and for the short document (composed by a certain al-Naḍr) that set out the words of the *bayᶜa* itself ('4').[73]

In May 744, when Yazīd III seized power fifteen months after al-Walīd II's accession, his coup installed a new group of administrators who were the clients of the new caliph and his supporters. In the *dīwān al-rasāʾil*, the *mawālī* associated with Saᶜīd and Marwān were replaced by the sons of another *mawlā*, Sulaymān b. Saᶜd al-Khushanī, who had served ᶜAbd al-Malik, al-Walīd I, Sulaymān and Yazīd II (685–724) as the *sāḥib dīwān al-kharāj wa'l-jund* ('head of the office of tax and the army'). As Sālim Abū al-ᶜAlāʾ is said to have been crucial in securing al-Walīd II's accession (albeit possibly according to his own testimony), Thābit b. Sulaymān was instrumental in Yazīd III's coup: Thābit b. Sulaymān sheltered Yazīd III at his house in Damascus before rebellion was publicly declared and is said to have written the letter sent to the provinces justifiying Yazīd's usurpation of the caliphate ('6'). Marwān II's defeat of Yazīd III later in 744 restored the fortunes of ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd, who was Marwān II's personal secretary and became the last Umayyad *ṣāḥib dīwān al-rasāʾil*.

Almost all these senior scribal administrators and advisers of the Marwanids in 724–50 appear to have been 'clients', or *mawālī*. That is, they were either affiliates of an Arabian tribe or individual by mutual agreement (and, usually, conversion to Islam, that is, by *walāʾ al-muwālāt*), or freed slaves, affiliated to their former masters by manumission (*walāʾ al-ᶜitq*), or the sons of such people.

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Although some sources attribute Arabian origins to them, this seems unlikely. Thus, no less an authority than Ibn ᶜAsākir (d. 1176) suggests that Rajāᵓ b. Ḥaywa, the early Marwanid courtier and authority for the succession document of Sulaymān from 717 ('1a'), was an Arab, providing various genealogies for him.[74] However, it seems more likely that Rajāᵓ's *nisba*, al-Kindī, indicates that he was a *mawlā* of the Banū Kinda, possibly from a family of southern Iraqi origin.[75] Likewise, Thābit b. Sulaymān b. Saᶜd al-Khushanī is said to have been Arab in Sprengling's 1939–40 survey of Umayyad administration,[76] but this again seems to confuse *nisba* with actual ethnic origin: Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ (d. 854) makes his father a *mawlā* of the Banū Khushayn.[77] There is more consensus about Sālim b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Abū al-ᶜAlāᵓ, who was most likely a *mawlā* of Saᶜīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik, perhaps from Anbār, in southern Iraq, like his fellow *mawlā* and son-in-law ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd, who had most likely been born a Muslim son of *mawālī* there.[78]

Sasanian influence on late Marwanid scribal practice

Sālim Abū al-ᶜAlāᵓ stands out as a crucially important figure among the scribal *mawālī* of the Marwanid caliphate. His influence was at its height during the reign of Hishām b. ᶜAbd al-Malik (r. 724–43), when he was the *ṣāḥib dīwān al-rasāᵓil*. In the Arabic tradition, Hishām is remembered as an administrative reformer who sponsored the study of Hellenistic and Iranian political culture.[79] Sālim was one of the leading figures who carried out the translations of these texts for the caliph, among them a Syriac version of a Greek work of political advice literature, known in Arabic as the *Rasāᵓil Arisṭāṭālīs ilā al-Iskandar* ('Letters of Aristotle to Alexander').[80] Features of *al-Siyāsat al-ᶜāmmīya* ('General Governmental Principles'), which may be an extant section of Sālim's Arabic translation of the 'Letters of Aristotle', argue for the utility of recognisably Sasanian administrative institutions, suggesting that the scribe was also familiar with late Sasanian treatises on political theory, such as that which became known as the *ᶜAhd Ardashīr* ('The Testament of Ardashir').[81]

It is in this Iranian heritage that we should perhaps seek part of the explanation of the use of texts at the late Marwanid *bayᶜa*. Figures like Sālim, who translated *al-Siyāsat al-ᶜāmmiyya*, and his pupil, ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd, who wrote a classicising 'Mirror for Princes' for Marwān II's son,[82] were an important channel of transmission for the transmission of Greek and Persian political thought and practice into late Marwanid caliphal court.[83] The caliphs' interest was probably prompted by political expediency: new methods were needed to persuade, and written texts, composed by talented non-Arab scribes who were loyal to the Marwanid dynasty,

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could contribute to the promulgation of a uniform message across the empire. Then, in the civil war of 743–4, the same skills were deployed in legitimating controversial succession plans, and then a coup.

Just as echoes of Iranian political theory can be detected in the mid-eighth-century *al-Siyāsat al-ᶜāmmiyya*, one of the texts associated with the *bayᶜa* includes one close parallel with the *ᶜAhd Ardashīr*, a late-sixth-century Pahlavi text that survives only in its mid-eighth-century Arabic translation.[84] ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd's letter from Marwān b. Muḥammad to al-Walīd II, congratulating the latter on his accession to the caliphate in 743 ('2'), describes how 'the intoxication of power' (*sakrat al-wilāya*) had overwhelmed the late Hishām when he sought to alter the succession in favour of his own sons, and persecuted al-Walīd b. Yazīd, the designated successor (and now caliph):

> May God bless the Commander of the Faithful (al-Walīd II) in the authority with which he has endowed him over His servants and in His bequest of His land (at al-Walīd II's accession). For the intoxication of power had overwhelmed Hishām (*wa-qad kānat sakrat al-wilāya ghashiyat Hishāman*) and he had reduced what God had made great regarding the rights of the Commander of the Faithful (al-Walīd II) and he had desired to make (acquisition of) the caliphate (*al-amr*) difficult for him.[85]

In the other recension of the same letter (which is very similar at this point), Hishām had been 'overwhelmed by the submerging flood, brought on by the intoxication of power' (*taghashshī ghamrat sakrat al-wilāya*).[86] In the latter case, the 'flood' (*ghamra*) echoes the Qurʾan,[87] and, in both versions, 'intoxication' (*sakra*) echoes a quranic metaphor. However, in the Qurʾān *sakra* is used as an analogy only for the 'confusion' of unbelievers, not with reference to royal power.[88] The 'intoxication of power' is not quranic, but rather a feature of Hellenistic and Sasanian *Fürstenspiegel* – the 'advice for princes' literature that circulated in the royal courts of the late antique Near East.

The Arabic translation of the late Sasanian *ᶜAhd Ardashīr* uses the same metaphor of intoxication in a form much closer to that in Marwān's letter, connecting it with the idea of power inebriating the monarch:

> The characteristics of kings are different from the characteristics of their flock. The king is characterised by power, security, happiness and the capacity for the characteristics of pride, insolence, hubris and vanity. The more his life increases in length, and his kingship in safety, the more the increase in these four characteristics, until this causes the intoxication of power (*sukr al-sulṭān*) in him, which is greater than the intoxication of wine.[89]

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Later in the *ᶜAhd Ardashīr*, the 'intoxication of the succession' is described:

> Indeed, regarding the intoxication of power which we have elucidated, the intoxication of the succession (*sukr al-wilāya*) is not sufficient for him in relation to the intoxication of kingship (*sukr al-mulk*). He becomes deaf before encountering kingship and becomes blind (too) – as with the deafness of kings and their blindness.[90]

Echoes of the *ᶜAhd Ardashīr* occur exactly at the point in Marwān's letter where Marwān appears to be alluding to Hishām's deluded efforts (from a perspective sympathetic to al-Walīd II) to alter the succession to al-Walīd II's detriment. These parallels of form, content and context would suggest that ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd (if he was indeed the scribe who composed the letter) was conversant not just with the language of the Qurʾān, which permeates the letter, but also with material like the *ᶜAhd Ardashīr*, which derived – at least in part (it is a mid-eighth-century translation) – from the royal court of the defeated Sasanian empire. Of course, the language of the Qurʾān itself reflects the pervasive presence of Sasanian Iran in the culture of the late antique Near East (and, to some extent, of Hellenistic philosophy). However, in this case, the close parallel with the *Fürstenspiegel* of late antique Iran suggests direct influence.

Although there may be other such echoes, this parallel with a translated Sasanian text is unusual in the seven Marwanid *bayᶜa* documents; in general, it is only the *idea* of the greater use of writing in organising the succession that might be partially attributed to Sasanian patterns. The Roman, Ḥimyarite and Iranian political traditions all included the system of the naming of an heir by the reigning king in the context of election, or at least affirmation, by elements of the ruling elite. That a similar system was first employed by Muᶜāwiya, and was institutionalised under ᶜAbd al-Malik and his sons, may suggest a Syrian, and hence Roman and/or Ḥimyarite context for the adoption of this practice by the Arabian–Muslims. Oath-taking featured in Roman accession and succession, but written covenants for the succession did not.[91] Thus, the written contract for succession was a divergence from Roman practice, and also one without a clear precedent in early Islam and the Arab world. Sasanian Iran would appear to be the obvious alternative source of influence. Two late copies of late Sasanian texts, the 'Letter of Tansar' and the *ᶜAhd Ardashīr*, do refer to the role of written texts in the designation of the Persian king's successor.[92]

> But let the ruler (*wālī*) among you look to God and to His flock, and (only) then, to himself. Then let him choose a possessor for the covenant after himself (*walīyan li'l-ᶜahd min baᶜdihi*). Then let him write his name on four sheets of paper, seal

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> them with his seal and entrust them to four individuals, who are the best of his kingdom's people. Then there must not be any matter by which the possessor of that covenant is indicated, nor should it be known approximately or vaguely, nor should (there be a matter) that gives suspicion towards him through avoiding or shunning. Let him be on his guard against that in speech and word.
>
> Then, when he dies, the letters in which it was copied are gathered, and they are all broken open. Then he whose name was set down in all of them is proclaimed by name.[93]

Such material is didactic rather than descriptive of actual practice, but it does seem that a written nomination for the succession was conceivable in Sasanian Iran.

After the installation of the Abbasid dynasty in 747–50 by revolutionaries from Khurasan, Iranian political culture became a dominant influence in the expression of caliphal authority, but traces of its earlier influence can be seen in the extant late Marwanid literature, just as clearer remnants of it survive in the remains of Marwanid material culture and perhaps also in literary accounts of their caliphal courts. However, for all that the greater use of writing in the organisation of the succession might be partially attributed to the influence of Sasanian practice on the later Marwanid caliphate, the documents for the pledge of allegiance retain an overwhelmingly Arabic and Islamic character: they are texts written to persuade within an evolving 'Islamic' paradigm, for public reading in the provinces before audiences predominantly composed of Arabian monotheists. These quranic allusions are treated separately, in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Qal., ix, 280ff. On the oaths, see above, pp. 107–8, and below, pp. 239–41.
2. Qal., ix, 348f.
3. See, e.g., Sijpesteijn and Sundelin, *Papyrology and History*; Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*; Khan, *Arabic Documents*.
4. For a mid eighth-century *amān*, where there are some comparable, but much lower-status, papyri, see Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct'.
5. On this transmission route, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 115; Sezgin, *Geschichte*, i, 311, 320; Rotter, 'Überlieferung', 103–33.
6. Cf. Athamina's introduction to Bal. (J), vib, 10.
7. *ʿUyūn*, 121–5, 152 (probably following al-Balādhurī).
8. Ṭab., ii, 1728ff.; cf. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxvi, 71, n. 379, 75, nn. 401, 402 (C. Hillenbrand).
9. Cf. Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct'.
10. The last reference to a source is some way back (Ṭab., ii, 1741); they follow what may be a break in the text (Ṭab., ii, 1755, l. 2); an abbreviated version of the *isnād* that cites Aḥmad b. Zuhayr (and hence al-Madāʾinī) is restated between documents '4' and '5', perhaps indicating a different source for '3' and '4' from that of '5' (Ṭab., ii, 1756, l. 15).

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11. On the recensions, see IS, i, 16; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ibn Saᶜd' (J. W. Fück).
12. IS, v, 336; Ṭab., ii, 1342; Yaq., ii, 3–4. (*ᶜUyūn*, 38, gives no sources.)
13. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Wāḳidī' (S. Leder), who notes a *Kitāb al-Mubāyaᶜāt* among his lost works.
14. Ṭab., ii, 1870, 1873.
15. IAṬ, fo. 125a; Ibn ᶜAbd Rabbihi, *al-ᶜIqd*, i, 50, iv, 464–5 (i, 20, ii, 347).
16. al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 99–100; Qal., vi, 391.
17. Ibn Qutayba, *ᶜUyūn*, i, 295.
18. The surviving manuscript of Khalīfa's *History* was copied in Spain in 1085: Khal., 34–43.
19. Bosworth, 'Rajāᵓ', 62–6.
20. *basmala* omitted in Yaq., ii, 361.
21. *ᶜUyūn*, 38.
22. IS, v, 336.
23. IS, v, 336.
24. 'and after you, Yazīd b. ᶜAbd al-Malik' omitted in Yaq., ii, 360.
25. *ᶜUyūn*, 38.
26. *lahu* ('to him') omitted in: Yaq., 361; *ᶜUyūn*, 38. Only the *Kitāb al-ᶜUyūn* has the prefix *li-* before each imperative verb.
27. Ṭab., ii, 1342; 'lest your enemy is emboldened against you' is omitted from Yaq., ii, 361.
28. Qal., vi, 389–90.
29. Marwān's letter also appears in the later *Kitāb al-ᶜUyūn*, but in a version very similar indeed to that in the *Ansāb al-ashrāf*; Yazīd III's letter is summarized in one line in the *Kitāb al-ᶜUyūn*. See *ᶜUyūn*, 124–5, 152.
30. Here, as elsewhere, al-Ṭabarī appears to be following a version of al-Madāᵓinī's work transmitted by Aḥmad b. Zuhayr (see above, p. 147). Al-Baladhurī's *qālū* ('they said') leaves his source uncertain. He may be citing al-Haytham b. ᶜAdī (d. 821–4), who appears as the source for immediately preceding material: Bal.(D), vii, 544; cf. Ṭab., ii, 1836–43 (a variety of traditionists). On al-Haytham, see Leder, *Das Korpus al-Haiṯam*. Alternatively, al-Madāᵓinī is also cited a little earlier: Bal.(D), vii, 538, 540; cf. Ṭab., ii, 1775–812, 1831–7.
31. See the comments by Crone and Hinds and their translation: Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 126ff.
32. Ṭab., ii, 1845.
33. Bal.(D), vii, 546.
34. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 128, n. 90. Cf. Bravmann, '*Bayᶜa* "homage"'.
35. Cf. Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct'.
36. But see Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 127, n. 81.
37. A point made by Calder, 'Review', 377–8; this can be accepted without Calder's conclusion that such 'documents' cannot be treated as evidence for the late Marwanid period.
38. Latham, 'Beginnings', 164ff.; ᶜAbbās, *ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd*; al-Qāḍī, 'Islamic state letters'; al-Qāḍī, 'Impact of the Qurᵓān'; al-Qāḍī, 'Religious foundation'.
39. ᶜAbbās, *ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 297–9; Bal.(D), vii, 496, n. 1.
40. ᶜAbbās, *ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 311, n. 4 (on the basis of style), though cf. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 117; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxvi, 115, n. 175 (C. Hillenbrand). It is worth noting that another of al-Walīd II's known secretaries was named Bukayr b. *Shamākh* al-Lakhmī: Biddle, 'Development', 157. However, both Samāl and Sammāl are attested

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as eighth-century Arabic names; we may simply be dealing with a text written by an otherwise unknown scribe working in the *dīwān al-rasāʾil* under Sālim, or under his son and successor, ʿAbd Allāh.

41. Cf. the comments of Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 116–17, and the work of al-Qāḍī (see above, n. 38).
42. ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 210–13.
43. ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 212.
44. Ṭab., ii, 1759–60; tr. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 121–2 (with minor changes).
45. Cf., e.g., ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 209–10, 213–15.
46. Cf. Robinson, *Historiography*, 22–3, 143–8.
47. Qal., vi, 391.
48. Latham, 'Beginnings'; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Risāla' (A. Arazi; M. Rahman; G. A. Tekin).
49. Schoeler, *Oral and the Written*.
50. Ṭab., ii, 1761–2.
51. Yaq., ii, 320.
52. For 'pulpit manifesto', see Crone and Zimmerman, *Epistle*, 23–4, 290–1 (where aspects of '5', al-Walīd II's letter, are discussed).
53. al-Qaynī is not clear in the MSS: Ṭab., ii, 1755, n. *n*.
54. Ṭab., ii, 1755–6.
55. See above, p. 70 (ʿUthmān) and pp. 87, 89 (Muʿāwiya); also Bal., iv/1, 289–90, 299–300, 352 iv/2, 484 = Bal.(D), iv, 320–1, 332–3, 391, vi, 311; Bal.(D), vii, 28, 164, 329, 493–4; Yaq., ii, 362, 404; Din., 350; *ʿUyūn*, 48. For a letter unrelated to the *bayʿa* that was to be read out to 'your army and your flock', see the letter of Hishām to Yūsuf b. ʿUmar, when the latter was in Yemen: ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 275. On the reading of a letter from the caliph, see Ṭab., ii, 870.
56. On ʿAqqāl b. Shabba al-Ḥimyarī al-Ḥamawī, see Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, xl, 480–2; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxvi, 73, n. 386 (C. Hillenbrand). On the office of *khaṭīb*, see *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Khaṭīb' (J. Pedersen).
57. He appears here and in the following, related *khabar* about al-Walīd II's letter ('5'): Ṭab., ii, 1756. On al-Qaynī, see above, n. 56.
58. Cf. Crone and Zimmermann, *Epistle*, 15–16, 23–4.
59. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 117.
60. For ʿAlī reading out a written *khuṭba*, see Bal.(D), ii, 319–20.
61. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, viiff.
62. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*; Crone and Zimmerman, *Epistle*.
63. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, 7, 8, 10; Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 129ff. On the letter as *khuṭba*, see Crone and Zimmermann, *Epistle*, 15ff., 23–4, 290ff.
64. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, 7.
65. Crone and Zimmermann, *Epistle*, 291ff.
66. Cannadine, 'Introduction', 2.
67. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 117.
68. Cf. Silverstein, *Postal Systems*, 74ff., where the devolved, provincial structure of the Umayyad postal system is noted; see also above, p. 137.
69. Ṭab., ii, 1729–30, 1750–1; Silverstein, *Postal Systems*, 78–9.
70. Biddle, 'Development', 157. But cf. Grignaschi, 'Les «Rasāʾil . . . »', 13, where he suggests that Sālim entered the employ of Sulaymān b. Hishām and, via him, the Kharijite caliph al-Ḍaḥḥāk (r. 745–6; Grignaschi gives 'Dašāk').

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71. Grignaschi, 'Les «Rasāʾil . . . »', 12, where he notes an alternative tradition that has him as the client of ʿAnbasa b. ʿAbd al-Malik.
72. Hamilton, *Walid*, 138f.; Khamis, 'A bronze weight'.
73. This is probably al-Naḍr b. Shumayl al-Ḥimyarī al-Ḥamawī, one of Hishām's *ṣaḥāba*: Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi, *al-ʿIqd*, v, 46 (iii, 21); Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, lxii, 69; Sezgin, *Geschichte*, 262; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxvi, 105, n. 527 (C. Hillenbrand).
74. Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, xviii, 96–116.
75. Bosworth, 'Rajāʾ', 37–9.
76. Sprengling, 'From Persian to Arabic', 213.
77. Khal., 299.
78. ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 25–8; al-Qāḍī, 'Impact of the Qurʾān', 286.
79. Grignaschi, 'Les «Rasāʾil . . . »', 14; Latham, 'Beginnings'; Crone, *Political Thought*, 149.
80. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 131; Grignaschi, 'Les «Rasāʾil . . . »', 14 *et passim*; Manzalaoui, 'Pseudo-Aristotelian', 162–3, 193.
81. Grignaschi, 'Les «Rasāʾil . . . »', 9f.; Latham, 'Beginnings', 155ff. Cf. Manzalaoui, 'Pseudo-Aristotelian', 160–1, 163–4; cf. ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 55ff.
82. Schönig, *Das Sendschreiben*; Latham, 'Beginnings', 167f.
83. On Sālim, see above, n. 81. On Persian influence on ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, see al-ʿAskarī, *Dīwān al-Maʿānī*, ii, 89; Zakeri, 'Early Persian Apophthegmata', 295. Cf. ʿAbbās, *ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 56.
84. On early translation from Persian to Arabic, see Sprengling, 'From Persian to Arabic'; Bosworth, 'The Persian impact'; Zakeri, 'ʿAlī ibn ʿUbaida', 89; Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 26–7.
85. Bal.(D), vii, 495. Cf. Ṭab., ii, 1752, for very similar material.
86. Ṭab., ii, 1752, l. 7; tr. al-Ṭabari, *History*, xxvi, 101 (C. Hillenbrand).
87. al-Ṭabari, *History*, xxvi, 101, n. 513 (C. Hillenbrand), citing Q 23.56 (54), 65 (63); Q 51.11.
88. Q 4. 43; Q 15.15; Q 22.2; Q 50.19, 72.
89. ʿAbbās, *ʿAhd Ardashīr*, 49. Cf. the Hellenistic Stoic philosopher, Epictetus (*c*. 55–135 CE), *Fragments*, 434, fr. 270: 'A fool having enjoyed good fortune like intoxication to a great amount becomes more foolish.'
90 ʿAbbās, *ʿAhd Ardashīr*, 68.
91. Oaths were sometimes taken from the army and administrators at the accession, but they do not seem to have been the elaborate documents that they became in the Islamic world: Svoronos, 'Le Serment', 106–9; Lee, *War*, 52–7. The first use of a written oath in organising the Roman succession was in 776. Leon IV refused to share the empire with his heir, Constantine, on the pretext that, should he die prematurely, Constantine might be assassinated. Instead he demanded a written statement from the factions, army, senate and guilds that they would accept only him, his son and his descendants as emperor: Svoronos, 'Le Serment', 109; Dagron, *Emperor*, 22.
92. Boyce, *Letter of Tansar*, 61–2 (where, predictably, the *mobad* has a determinative role).
93. ʿAbbās, *ʿAhd Ardashīr*, 67–8.

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CHAPTER

9

THE QURANIC CONTENT OF THE MARWANID DOCUMENTS

The features that the *rasāʾil* of al-Walīd II and Yazīd III share with mid-eighth-century 'religious epistles' give some indication of their function: they are to be read out to large audiences at (in the extant cases) Iraqi and Khurasani mosques. They are also statements of religio-political dogma that begin with the general (even 'banal') and move to the particular (and highly contested) for sound rhetorical reasons. Just as the 'religious epistles' and sermons of the Kharijites were propaganda, the purpose of the late Marwanid texts is also persuasion – the communication of the caliph's claim to legitimate authority, to the exclusion of all other rival religio-political positions. Thus, the public documents from the late Marwanid *bayʿa* are a partial record of caliphal articulations of their claims to authority (or, at least, the articulations of their scribes and advisers) and hence a partial record of an unequal dialogue between rulers and ruled.

As with the 'religious epistles' of their rivals, much of the language with which these texts seek to persuade echoes that of the Qurʾān. As with other Marwanid letters, lengthy quranic quotation is comparatively rare. Nonetheless, the Marwanid texts are replete with quranic allusion and quranic vocabulary. As with the still-growing corpus of seventh- and eighth-century quranic Arabic inscriptions, the content of later copies of documents from the *dīwān al-rasāʾil* leads to the conclusion that something closely resembling the canonical quranic text was already of great significance to Muslims of the Marwanid era.[1] The authors of the Marwanid documents deployed this quranic vocabulary to persuade audiences of their masters' legitimacy, through a carefully articulated version of Arabian monotheist ideology.

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The language of allegiance and succession in al-Walīd II's 'covenant' of 743 ('4')

As we have seen, in 743 al-Walīd II's Iraqi governor, Yūsuf b. ᶜUmar (r. 738–44), wrote instructions to his sub-governor in Khurasan, Naṣr b. Sayyār (r. 738–48), about the succession documents for the sons of al-Walīd II ('3'):

> Take the oath of allegiance to them both (i.e. al-Walīd II's sons) in the name of God and His blessing (*ᶜalā ism Allāh wa-barakatihi*) and impose upon them the covenants (*khudh ᶜalayhim bi'l-mawāthīq*),[2] which I have copied for you at the end of this letter of mine (and) which the Commander of the Faithful copied for us in his letter.[3]

The 'covenants' (*al-mawāthīq*) to which he refers ('4') duly follow (with the addition, here, of numbered clauses):

§1 In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful:
§2 You give the pledge of allegiance to (*tubāyiᶜu li-*)[4] the Servant of God, al-Walīd, Commander of the Faithful and al-Ḥakam, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, if he outlives him, and ᶜUthmān, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, if he outlives al-Ḥakam, on the condition of hearing and obeying (*ᶜalā al-samᶜ wa'l-ṭāᶜa*).
§3 If[5] anything should happen to one of the two of them, the Commander of the Faithful will assign rule (*amlaka*) to one of his children or his flock; he will put first whomever he wishes, and will put last whomever he wishes.
§4 You are bound in this by God's covenant (*ᶜahd*) and His compact (*mīthāq*).[6]

The text is a Near Eastern treaty formula, with a structure familiar from the pre-Islamic instances discussed in Chapter 1. It begins with an invocation of God, in whose name Yūsuf b. ᶜUmar has just stipulated that the pledge be taken (§1). Two clauses stipulate that (§2) it is a pledge of allegiance to al-Walīd II and to his two sons, should they outlive him, 'on condition of hearing and obeying' (*ᶜalā al-samᶜ wa'l-ṭāᶜa*) and that (§3) al-Walīd II reserves the right to pass the succession to anyone else, should his nominees predecease him, and to alter the sequence of the succession. Finally (§4), God's covenant is invoked to guarantee the agreement: 'You are bound in this by God's covenant and His compact' (*ᶜalaykum bi-dhālik ᶜahd Allāh wa-mīthāquhu*).

The language of the agreement is distinctively quranic. Indeed, this short late Marwanid text consists of little but quranic allusion, through which it makes a powerful claim for the absolute authority of al-Walīd II. The *basmala*, with which

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all but one of the Qurʾān's 114 *sūra*s begins, is attested as the standard opening formula in Muslim inscriptions and documents from the mid-seventh century, and it is duly the opening clause of al-Walīd II's covenants (§1). The first substantive clause (§2) begins *tubāyiʿu li-* . . . The verb is quranic (Q 9.111; Q 48.10, 18; Q 60.12 – albeit that the particle *li-* is not found in the Qurʾān, where *bāyaʿa* always takes a direct object).

The same clause (§2) stipulates the terms of the agreement: 'for hearing and obeying' (*ʿalā al-samʿ wa'l-ṭāʿa*). This is a quranic pairing, which occurs five times (Q 2.285; Q 4.46; Q 5.7; Q 24.51; Q 64.16). The correspondence with the Qurʾān is in the association of the two words; none of the six Qurʾān verses includes precisely this phrase, but the allusion is unmistakable. Wherever it appears in the Qurʾān, 'hearing and obeying' is implicitly connected to fulfilment of God's covenant (as are similar biblical pairings).[7] In verse seven of *sūrat al-Māʾida* the connection between 'hearing and obeying' and 'God's covenant' is made explicit:

> Remember the favour (*niʿma*) of God towards you[pl] and His covenant (*mīthāq*) which He covenanted (*wāthaqa*) with you when you said, 'We hear and obey (*samiʿnā wa-aṭaʿnā*).' And fear God (*wāʾttaqū Allāh*), for God knows the secrets of your breasts. (Q 5.7)

In some of the earliest extant *tafsīr*, or quranic exegesis, this verse is associated with Adam's covenant with God, imposed on all Humanity at Creation. A mid-eighth-century interpretation of the verse, by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 770),[8] describes the covenant (*mīthāq*) in these terms.

> God imposed the first covenant upon humanity when He created them from the spine (*ṣulb*) of Adam. His speech was thus: 'And when your Lord took out from the Banu Adam, from their backs, their progeny and made them testify for themselves, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Indeed, we bear witness (Q. 7.172) over our souls."' Whoever among them fulfils it in deed and acknowledges God with oaths to Him, His verses, His books, His messengers, the Book, the angels, Heaven and Hell, the permitted and the forbidden, the obligatory and the prohibited, if he fulfils his obligations to God in this, then God will fulfil His obligations to him in Heaven. So these are the two covenants: the covenant by oaths to God and the covenant in deeds. That is His word in *al-Baqara*, 'We hear and obey' (Q 2.285) we hear the Qurʾān which came from God and we obey God in it . . .[9]

In Muqātil's exegesis, verse seven of *sūrat al-Māʾida* is held to refer to God's primordial covenant with Adam, as set out in verse 172 of *sūrat al-Aʿrāf*, to

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which he refers. The prominence of Adam in Muqātil's *Tafsīr* (other interpretations emphasised Muḥammad's covenant with the Muslims) echoes other late antique monotheist texts, not least the Syriac *Book of the Cave of Treasures*.[10] To audiences acquainted with such material, the 'covenant' and the notion of 'hearing and obeying' would have recalled these ideas of a universal covenant, represented by God's caliph, just as a visually literate audience would have understood the analogous symbolism in the iconography of al-Walīd II's palace at Quṣayr ᶜAmra.[11]

In the final clause of the document (§4), God's covenant is specifically invoked. Again, the precise phrase is not known in the Qurʾān, but the juxtaposition of the vocabulary is. The construct *ᶜahd Allāh* ('God's covenant') appears eight times in the Qurʾān and the noun *ᶜahd* appears twenty-nine times in all.[12] The near-synonym, *mīthāq* ('covenant', 'compact', 'plighted word'), appears twenty-five times.[13] However, *ᶜahd* and *mīthāq* occur together in the same verse, as they appear together in al-Walīd II's covenant, in only three places (Q 2.27, Q 13.20, 25). Two of these instances (verses 20–25 of *sūrat al-Raᶜd*) contrast the heavenly rewards for fulfilling God's covenant with the disastrous penalties for breaking it (the third, Q 2.27, repeats Q 13.25 almost verbatim):

(20) Those who fulfil the covenant of God and do not break (their) plighted word (or 'covenant', *alladhīna yūfūna bi-ᶜahdi 'llāhi wa-lā yanquḍūna 'l-mīthāqa*);
(21) Those who join together those things which God has commanded be joined, hold their Lord in awe and fear the terrible reckoning (*wa'lladhīna yaṣilūna mā amara Allāh bihi an yūṣala wa-yakhshūna Rabbahum wa-yakhāfūna suwʾa 'l-ḥisāb*);
(22) Those who patiently persevere seeking the countenance of their Lord; establish prayers; spend out the gifts we have bestowed for their sustenance, secretly and openly, and turn off evil with good: for such there is the final attainment of the home.
(23) Gardens of perpetual bliss they shall enter there, as well as the righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their offspring: and angels shall enter unto them from every gate.
(24) Peace unto you for that you persevered in patience! Now how excellent is the final home!
(25) But those who break the covenant of God, after having plighted their word (*wa'lladhīna yanquḍūna ᶜahda'llāhi min baᶜdi mīthāqihi*) and cut asunder those things which God has commanded to be joined, and work mischief in the land; – on them is the curse; for them is the terrible home! (Q 13.20–5)

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Where *ʿahd* and *mīthāq* appear together in the Qurʾān, they appear in the context of the obligation to fufil God's covenant in expectation of the rewards of Heaven and fear of punishment in Hell.[14] Thus, al-Walīd II's covenant for himself and his sons sought to bring about a direct association between his own authority and that of God through language that would have had great allusive force to an audience composed largely of Arabic-speaking monotheists, familiar with the cadences and vocabulary of the Qurʾān (and perhaps also with the Bible and other late antique monotheist literature, such as *The Book of the Cave of Treasures*). Indeed, when read alongside both its quranic intertexts and the contemporaneous *tafsīr* of Muqātil, the implication is that the contract made with al-Walīd II and his two sons through the pledge of allegiance is in some sense coterminous with God's primordial covenant with Humanity, which He was held to have contracted when He created Adam.

As discussed in Chapter 8, it may be unwise to rely heavily upon the evidence of a single copy of a document, especially one like al-Walīd's covenant, which is preserved in only one extant source. However, the quranic vocabulary of the covenants for al-Walīd II's succession ('4') has served as a useful exemplar of something that is replicated in all the other six purported Marwanid documents relating to the *bayʿa*. Between them, the seven texts indicate a well-established quranic vocabulary used by Muslims contesting religio-political authority in the middle of the eighth century. All attest to the *bayʿa* as the established institution for recognising caliphal authority and all exemplify the use of the quranic language of God's covenant to legitimate that agreement.

BĀYAʿA AND *BAYʿA*

That the verb *bāyaʿa* and the related substantive, *bayʿa*, had indeed become the standard terms for the pledge of allegiance to the caliph and his successors is in no doubt. In four of the seven extant texts ('3', '4', '5', '6'), the giving or receiving of the pledge of allegiance is referred to by the quranic verb *bāyaʿa*.[15] In two others ('2', '7'), the pledge itself is described by the noun, *bayʿa*, which is not found in the Qurʾān, but derives from *bāyaʿa*, which is.[16] (The remaining document, '1a', makes no mention of the actual pledge.)

Marwān b. Muḥammad's letter to al-Walīd II ('2') is unique among the seven in also using the expression *absaṭa al-yad* ('to hold out the hand') twice, once with *li'l-bayʿa* ('for the pledge of allegiance') and once on its own, but with the same sense.[17] A similar formula (based on *maddā*) is found in early eighth-century panegyric poetry about allegiance to the Marwanids and both verbal phrases are found in the later tradition.[18] In the Qurʾān, *yad* is sometimes used to refer to the 'hand' or the 'oath' in the giving of allegiance (Q 48.10). The

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similar quranic phrase (based on a different form of the root *bāʾ–sīn–ṭāʾ*) *basaṭa li-* is used of God granting sustenance (*rizq*) to His servants (Q 13.62, Q 17.30, etc.). Both the sense of 'stretching-out the hand' for a pact (and thus for reward and blessing) and in hostility have numerous ancient Near Eastern precedents.[19] (*Basaṭa al-yad ilā* has a negative sense in the Qurʾān, where it conveys antipathy [Q 5.11, 28, etc.]).

GOD'S COVENANT

All but one of the texts invoke 'God's covenant' (*ʿahd Allāh* or *mīthāq Allāh*) as binding the parties to the agreement. (The sole exception is '7', Marwān's aphoristic querying of Marwān b. Muḥammad's loyalty where *al-bayʿa* is the only mention of a covenant.) The clearest examples are Sulaymān's decree concerning the succession ('1a'), from 717, and al-Walīd II's letter to Iraq and Khurasan ('5'), from 743.

Sulaymān's covenant for the succession ('1a') ends:

> So [let the faithful][20] hear him[21] and obey, fear God and do not fall into disagreement, lest (your enemy) is emboldened against you (*fa-ismaʿū lahu wa-aṭīʿū wa-ittaqū Allāh wa-lā yukhtalifū fa-yuṭmaʿa fīkum*).[22]

As with al-Walīd II's covenant ('4'), the obvious allusion is to verse 16 of *sūrat al-Taghābun*: 'So fear God as much as you are able, and hear and obey . . .' (*fa-ittaqū Allāh mā istaṭaʿtum wa-ismaʿū wa-atīʿū*).[23] But there are also echoes of other verses in the injunction against *ikhtilāf* ('falling into disagreement'), where this is a characteristic of covenant-breakers and infidels:

> But the sects differ (*ikhtalafa*) among themselves: and woe to the unbelievers (*alladhīna kafarū*) because of the coming Judgement of a momentous Day! (Q 19.37)
> Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations (*tafarraqū wāʾkhtalafū*) after receiving clear signs: for them is a dreadful penalty. (Q 3.105)

The former verse (Q 19.37) appears in a passage criticising Christological dispute among monotheists (although it does use *kafara*, a verb often used in the context of the violation of religio-political covenant). However, the latter text (Q 3.105) refers directly to the political unity of the believers. In the verse that immediately precedes it (Q 3.104) there is a reference to 'the community which calls for good' (*umma yadʿūna ilā al-khayr*). This, and verse 105, complete a section of the Qurʾān (Q 3.102–5) that enjoins the believers to 'fear God' (*ittāqū Allāh*)

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and 'hold fast together to God's rope (*ḥabl*, that is, His "covenant"[24])'. That the Umayyads have pledged to uphold Sulaymān's decree under 'God's covenant' is emphasised by these quranic allusions.

The much fuller letter of al-Walīd II ('5') is potentially a very rich source for late Marwanid political theory.[25] It repeatedly invokes God's covenant and makes it absolutely clear that the caliph is the representative of God's covenant on earth. After the first part of the 'mission topos' describing the era of the prophets, the era of the caliphs is introduced:

> Then (after the era of the prophets) God deputed His caliphs over the path of His prophethood – (that is) when He took back His Prophet and sealed His revelation with him – for the implementation of His decree (*ḥukm*), the establishment of His normative practice (*sunna*) and restrictive statutes (*ḥudūd*), and for the observance of His ordinances (*farāʾīd*) and His rights (*ḥuqūq*), supporting Islam, consolidating that by which it is rendered firm (*tashdīdan*), strengthening the strands of His covenant (*ḥabl*), keeping [people] away from His forbidden things, providing for equity (*ʿadl*) among His servants and putting His lands to right, (doing all of these things) through them.[26]

The passage is packed with quranic resonances, notably, in this context, these include the use of *ḥabl* ('rope', 'covenant'), which, as in the succession document of Sulaymān and in some Umayyad panegyric, echoes verse 103 of *sūrat Āl ʿImrān*, which begins: 'And hold fast, all together, to God's rope (or "covenant") and do not scatter and remember God's favour upon you . . .' (*waʾʿtaṣimū bi-ḥabli ʾllāhi jamīʿan wa-lā tafarraqū waʾdhkurū niʿmata ʾllāhi . . .*).

The consequence of God's delegation of authority on earth to the caliphs is the obligation of obedience to them as His delegates:

> God – blessed and exalted is He – says, 'And if God had not kept back the people, some by means of others, surely the earth would have been corrupted; but God is bounteous to all the worlds.' (Q 2.251) So the caliphs of God followed one another, in charge of that which (*amr*) God had caused them to inherit (*awrathahum*) from His prophets and over which He had deputed them. Nobody can dispute their right without God casting him down, and nobody can separate from their polity (*jamāʿa*) without God destroying him (*ahlakahum*) . . . He has made him an example (*nakālan*) and a warning to others. This is how God has acted towards anyone who has departed from the obedience (*fāraqa al-ṭāʿa*) to which He has ordered (people) to cling, adhere and devote themselves, and through which it is that the heaven and earth are supported (*qāmat bihā al-samawāt waʾl-arḍ*) . . . God – blessed and exalted is He – says, 'Then He lifted Himself to heaven

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> when it was smoke, and said to it and to earth, "Come willingly or unwillingly." They said, "We come willingly"' (Q 41.11). And God – exalted is His invocation – says, 'When your Lord said to the angels, "I am placing a deputy (*khalīfa*) on earth", they said, "Are you placing in it someone who will act corruptly and shed blood while we are celebrating Your praise and sanctifying You?" He said, "I know what you know not."' (Q 2.30)[27]

'God's keeping back of the people, some by means of others' – that is, His imposition of the ruler's authority through force – to which the opening quranic quotation refers is David's victory over Goliath: God's first dynast is invoked to support the long-standing Umayyad claim that God's chosen ruler's victories secure his authority and hence peace – preventing 'corruption of the earth' (*fasadat al-arḍ*), an ancient image of the consequences of criminality and unrest that appears in the Qurʾān. God 'destroys' (*ahlaka*) those who depart from obedience (*al-ṭāʿa*) to the caliph and God and subjects them to 'exemplary punishment' (*nakāl*).

That it is God's primordial covenant with Humanity that the 'polity' (*jamāʿa*) must fulfil by obeying the caliph is implied by the statement that it is 'through it that the heavens and the earth are supported' (*wa'llatī qāmat bihā al-samawāt wa'l-arḍ*). This is a quranic phrase that was often understood to refer to God's first covenant with Humanity at Creation:

> We did indeed offer the trust (*al-amāna*) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but Man undertook it – he was indeed unjust and foolish – so that God must punish the hypocrite men and women and the polytheist men and women, but God turns to the believing men and women (*al-muʾminīn wa'l-muʾmināt*), and God is Forgiving, Merciful. (Q 33.72–3)

> It is God Who sustains the heavens and the earth, lest they cease: and if they should fail, there is none – not one – can sustain them thereafter: verily He is Most Forbearing, Forgiving. (Q 35.41)

Two more quranic passages about the same covenant with Man at Creation are then cited (Q 41.11; Q 2.30), culminating with the appointment of Adam as 'God's caliph on earth'.

BLESSINGS AND CURSES

The Arabic, quranic articulation of principle of God's covenant is echoed in many of the texts beyond their use of *bayʿa*, *ʿahd*, *mīthāq* and the associated concepts of unity, fearing, hearing and obeying. Perhaps the most important allusions are

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to the blessings and curses contingent on fulfilment or violation of the pledge. The covenant with the caliph is in some sense the 'fulfilment' or 'completion' of God's covenant – one of the gifts by which God obliges Humanity's obedience. As al-Walīd II's letter ('5') puts it: 'the covenant (for the succession) is part of the fulfilment (or "completion") of Islam and the perfection of those mighty favours by which God makes His people obliged to Him' (*hādha'l-ᶜahd min tamām al-islām wa-kamāl mā istawjaba Allāh ᶜalā ahlihi min al-minan al-ᶜiẓām*).[28] The allusions are to verses 3 and 6 of *sūrat al-Māᵓida*, verse 6 of *sūrat Yūsuf* and verse 12 of *sūrat al-Fatḥ*. In every case, the quranic verses refer to favours (*minan*, *niᶜam*) bestowed upon believers as part of their covenant with God. Here, as elsewhere, there are also important biblical echoes: Semitic roots associated with wholeness and perfection (*tmym*, *šlm*) 'are found in connection with gifts obtained by virtue of loyalty', that is with God's benevolence to his followers, in Genesis, in Kings and in other books of the Hebrew Bible. (The biblical terms and, directly or indirectly, the quranic ones are probably derived ultimately from the language of Assyrian royal land grants.)[29]

ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd has his master, Marwān b. Muḥammad, refer to the same idea of the accession or succession of the caliph as one of the favours of God in his letter to al-Walīd II ('2') on the latter's accession in 743:

> I stood on the pulpit . . . in order to inform those who were before me with what God had blessed them (*mā imtanna Allāh bihi ᶜalayhim*), with respect to the appointment of the Commander of the Faithful. They rejoiced about that (*fa'stabsharū li-dhālik*), and said: '(News) of the appointment of a caliph has never reached us about which our hopes were greater, nor do we find anything more joyful than the appointment of the Commander of the Faithful.' [30]

The clearest specifically quranic resonance here is in the verb 'to rejoice' (*istabshara*), which refers to the joy of believers at the blessings received through God's fulfilment of His covenant in five of its seven occurrences in the Qurᵓān.[31] In one of these verses, *istabshara* is used of the believers in relation to the 'covenant' (*ᶜahd*, *bayᶜ*) they have made with God (*bāyaᶜtum*) for jihad (Q 9.111).[32]

The corollary of the blessings associated with the covenant and its fulfilment are the curses contingent upon perjury. In these late Marwanid texts, as in the Qurᵓān and the Bible, violation of God's covenant leads to 'destruction'. Thus, al-Walīd II's letter ('5') says of the caliphs:

> Nobody can dispute their right without God casting him down, and nobody can separate from their polity (*jamāᶜa*) without God destroying him (*ahlakahu*), nor can anyone hold their government in contempt or query the decree of God

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> concerning them without God placing him in their power and giving them mastery over him; thus He makes him an example (*nakālan*) and a warning to others.[33]

Again, there are clear parallels with Marwān's letter ('2'):

> (God) has preserved (the caliph) from what the evildoers plot; and He has elevated him and has brought them low. Anyone who persists in such base actions destroys his soul and angers his Lord (*awtagha nafsahu wa-askhaṭa rabbahu*), but anyone whom repentence directs to the true course, turning away from wrong toward right, will find God forgiving, merciful.[34]

Among the quranic resonances in the second passage are *askhaṭa Allāh* ('he/it angers God') (Q 47.28) and the verb *awbaqa* ('to destroy'), used in the Qurʾān in relation to the penalties for violation of the covenant with God through sin (Q 18.52; Q 42.34). In Marwān's letter, however, the latter penalty is 'destruction of (the sinner's) self', or 'his soul', which recalls the penalty clause of the Prophet's (and God's) covenant with his followers at verse 48 of *sūrat al-Fatḥ*, where, 'Whoever betrays [it] (*nakatha*) in truth betrays his own soul (*yankuthu ʿalā nafsihi*) and whoever fulfils what he has covenanted with God, He will grant him a great reward'. Equally, it also evokes the penalty clause of the 'Constitution of Medina': 'But whoever acts unjustly (*ẓalama*) and sins will only destroy himself [or "his soul"] and his agnates' (*lā yūtighu illā anfusahu wa-ahl baytihi*).[35] In the former text – al-Walīd II's letter – the concomitant phrase is *ahlakahu* ('[God] destroys him'), which is also quranic. Indeed, the root *hāʾ–lām–kāf* is far more prevalent in the quranic text; it occurs more than sixty times, usually with the sense of God's destruction of those in rebellion against Him.[36]

These penalty and reward clauses make it very clear that the later Umayyads conceived of the oath of allegiance to them as integral to the covenant with God – indeed, as its 'completion' – and thus subject to the rewards and penalties associated with fulfilment or violation of His covenant. Al-Walīd II's invocation of *nakāl* ('exemplary punishments', cf. Q 5.38, Q 73.12, Q 79.25, etc.) in the curses is notable. It appears to refer to the earthly penalties for rebellion, such as imprisonment, exile and death, discussed above in Chapter 5. As in the Umayyad poetry, an explicit connection is made between the spiritual consequences of violating God's covenant and the earthly consequences of violating the covenant with His deputy.

CONCLUSIONS

With the corpus that comprises the *ʿahd* of Sulaymān, purportedly from 717, and the six copies of late Marwanid documents, from 743–4, we arrive at detailed, and

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relatively secure, evidence for caliphal efforts to shape ideology in favour of their legitimacy. These texts reflect the formation of a bureaucracy, staffed for the most part by non-Arab *mawālī* from Mesopotamia and Iraq, who produced elaborate works of propaganda designed to be read out before large audiences in order to deliver this message. In prose as in poetry and material culture the Marwanid caliphs propounded a distinctive ideology of monotheist, Arabic–Islamic monarchy, in which they, perhaps even more unambiguously than the Roman and Sasanian rulers before them, claimed to be God's sole representatives on earth.

The Marwanids' public documents of accession and succession invoke an Arabic and quranic iteration of the ancient terms of Near Eastern kingship. Umayyad public rhetoric would have resonated among all monotheist Arabic-speakers (after all, a large proportion of their most loyal following were Christianised Romano-Syrian nomads). The figures of David and Adam, invoked by al-Walīd II, loom particularly large as precursors for caliphal legitimacy. To a reader versed in the Qurʾān, these texts are strikingly quranic, full of allusion, quotation and thematic resonance. In this language and symbolism there are some clear continuities with the terms in which the sixth- and seventh-century Arabians articulated their religio-political ideas (in so far as we can now perceive them, as discussed in Part I). The seven texts also conform to the pattern of the wider corpus of copies of late Marwanid caliphal documents, and also – to anticipate some of the conclusions of later chapters on the Abbasids – to patterns found in later documents, too.

However, the Marwanid texts are also quite different in some important respects from later, 'classical' formulas for documents connected with the oath of allegiance. Most notable of all, perhaps, is the very limited direct reference to the Prophet's oaths of allegiance, and the absence of the quotation of what eventually became the *locus classicus* for the caliphal *bayʿa*, verse 10 of *sūrat al-Fatḥ* ('Those who pledge allegiance to me, in truth pledge allegiance to God . . .'). With such a tiny fraction of the original data still extant, and with the continuing possibility that more material may be discovered, it is perilous to attribute too much weight to an argument based upon this silence. However, if the silence reflects a real absence, it perhaps reflects the changing significance of the quranic verse: because the Umayyads claimed to represent God's covenant as the biblical and quranic patriarchs had before them, they referred in much more general terms to the obligation of obedience to the monarch as God's representative on earth, without actually quoting a verse associated closely with the memory of Muḥammad. In the Islamic empire of the first half of the eighth century, quranic language was well established as the vocabulary of legitimate authority, but the Marwanids deployed that vocabulary to articulate a religio-political position that ultimately failed and can now only be recovered incompletely.

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NOTES

1. al-Qāḍī, 'Impact of the Qurʾān'; Hoyland, 'Content and context'; Hoyland, 'New documentary texts'.
2. Or *khudh ʿalayhim al-ʿahd wa'l-mīthāq*: Ṭab, ii, 1755, n. *s*.
3. Ṭab, ii, 1755.
4. Or *nubāyiʿu li-*: Ṭab., ii, 1756, n. *e*.
5. Either *wa-in* or *fa-in*: Ṭab., ii, 1756, n. *g*.
6. Ṭab, ii, 1756.
7. See above Ch. 3, nn. 85 and 87.
8. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Muqātil b. Sulaymān' (M. Plessner and A. Rippin); Gilliot, 'Muqātil, grand exégète'; Rippin, 'Studying early *Tafsīr* texts', esp. 318–23; Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar*, 41–94 and 130ff.; Robinson, 'Muslims, Jews and Pagans', 130; Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, 8; Berg, *Development of Exegesis*.
9. Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, i, 456–7.
10. Pseudo-Ephraim the Syrian, *Cave of Treasures*, 51ff.
11. See above, pp. 126–8.
12. *ʿAhd Allāh*: Q 2.27, Q 3.77, Q 6.152, Q 13.20, 25, Q 16.91, Q 16.95, Q 33.15. Where *ʿahd* occurs alone, it explicitly refers to a covenant with or before God in twenty instances: AB, s.v. See also the verbs *ʿahida* (God contracting with Man) and *ʿāhada* (Man contracting with God, or others).
13. AB, s.v. Of these, twenty-one are direct references to a covenant with God; the other four are references to agreements between men (Q 4.21, Q 4.90, Q 4.92 and Q 8.72). Other variants of the root *waw–thāʾ–qāf* also occur.
14. Cf. Matthew 19: 6 (Jesus on marriage).
15. Bal.(D), vii, 546; Ṭab., ii, 1755, l. 15, 1756, l. 1 ('3'), 1756, l. 5 ('4'), 1763 ('5'). Regarding Ṭab., ii, 1745, l. 7, where *tābiʿū* replaces the expected *bāyiʿū*, see above, pp. 150–1.
16. Bal.(D), vii, 495 ('2'); Ṭab, ii, 1753 ('2').
17. Bal.(D), vii, 495, 496 ('2'); Ṭab., ii, 1753, ll. 9, 12 ('2').
18. See above, p. 114, and below, p. 196.
19. See above, p. 28, and Ch. 1, n. 19.
20. *ʿUyūn*, 38.
21. *lahu* ('to him') omitted in Yaq., ii, 361; *ʿUyūn*, 38. Only the latter has the prefix *li-* before each imperative verb.
22. Ṭab., ii, 1342; 'lest your enemy is emboldened against you' is omitted in Yaq., ii, 361.
23. Q 64.16.
24. See above, pp. 26, 30, 109. *Ḥabl* is used with this sense at Q 3.103, 112.
25. For this reason, it was used by Crone and Hinds in *God's Caliph*, 10, 26ff., 116ff.
26. Ṭab., ii, 1758; tr. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 120, with minor changes.
27. Ṭab., ii, 1758–9; tr. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 120, with minor changes.
28. Ṭab., ii, 1761; tr. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 123.
29. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 150, 1.36, citing Genesis 17: 1, 1 Kings 3: 6, 9: 4–5; Weinfeld, *Deutoronomic School*, 75f.; but cf. Knoppers, 'Ancient Near Eastern royal grants'.)
30. Ṭab., ii, 1753. Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxvi, 102 (C. Hillenbrand).
31. Q 3.170; Q 3.171; Q 9.111, 124; Q 30.48. The exceptions are at Q 15.67 and Q 39.45, where *istabshara* is used of the impious or unbelievers rejoicing for the wrong reasons.

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32. See above, pp. 44-9.
33. Ṭab., ii, 1758; tr. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 120.
34. Ṭab, ii, 1753; following Hillenbrand's translation, with modifications: al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 102 (C. Hillenbrand).
35. Lecker, *Constitution*, 8 and 35, §28; cf. ibid., 148 and n. 46. See above, p. 50.
36. Cf. AB, s.v.

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PART III

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THE EARLY ABBASID CALIPHATE (*c.* 750–809)

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INTRODUCTION

In the latter part of the Umayyad period, clandestine revolutionaries in the north-eastern frontier province of Khurasan began to call for *al-riḍā min āl Muḥammad* ('the Chosen One from the Family of the Prophet') and *al-kitāb wa'l-sunna* ('the Book and Custom'). The first slogan invoked the idea that the caliph should be drawn from the Prophet's clan of Hāshim (as opposed to merely from Quraysh, like the Umayyads) and that he should be chosen by the Muslims, not imposed upon them. The second appealed to Islamic piety as the basis for just rule: if God's word and the customs of His Prophet and His community were followed, then a truly just society would be the result.[1] The collapse of Umayyad dynastic unity after 743–4 led to a series of rebellions across the caliphate. Then, in 747, sections of the army in Khurasan loyal to the 'Hashimite' cause rebelled. Many of the indigenous population of the province joined the revolt, pledging allegiance to a movement that held out the possibility of access to the benefits of membership of the Muslim military elite.[2]

With their numbers swollen by the new converts, the revolutionary armies swept out of Khurasan and won a series of lightning victories. Syncretic, millenarian beliefs gave these armies a fervour that worked to their advantage on the battlefield.[3] In the winter of 749–50, with success looking increasingly certain, a revolutionary cell in the Iraqi city of Kufa proclaimed ᶜAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad Abū al-ᶜAbbās as the new caliph (r. *c*. 750–4). Abū al-ᶜAbbās, later sometimes known as al-Saffāḥ, was the great-great-grandson of the Prophet's Companion and uncle, al-ᶜAbbās b. ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim (whence 'Abbasid'); that is, he was from the Prophet's tribe of Banū Hāshim, and a fourth cousin of the Prophet. ᶜAbū al-ᶜAbbās died after only three and a half years, and so the task of consolidating the Abbasid family's grip on the Islamic empire fell to his brother,

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Abū Jaᶜfar 'al-Manṣūr' (r. 754–75), or 'the One Made Victorious (by God)', a title he adopted in the 760s.[4] Al-Manṣūr's reign, like those of Muᶜāwiya, ᶜAbd al-Malik and Hishām, whom he was said to have admired,[5] was a crucible for the invention of tradition, and many of his innovations in ceremonial were retained in subsequent generations. Caliphal ceremonial became a symbolic expression of the Abbasids' claims to be the imams of a universal monarchy, modelled in many respects on Sasanian imperial rule, but legitimated by their claims to be the inheritors of the authority of the Prophet.

The transformation of political culture in the early Abbasid period

Umayyad imperial politics had been determined by the balance of alliances within the ruling Arabian tribe and between the ruling tribe and their armies (and Umayyad rule disintegrated when this balance failed).[6] The Abbasid Revolution overturned the Umayyad, tribal order and replaced it with a system based on the military power of the Khurasani revolutionary army and the charismatic authority of the caliph as a world-ruler who transcended ethnic or tribal distinctions.[7] In the new dispensation, access to power was achieved through the patronage of the caliph. Although his power was founded on the loyalty of the commanders (*quwwād*) of the Khurasanis, he also sought alternative sources of support in his agnates (*ahl al-bayt*), clients (*mawālī*), companions (*ṣaḥāba*), scribes and administrators (*kuttāb*) and servants (*khuddām*).[8]As a direct consequence of these new structures of power, the public communication of loyalty and status gained a heightened importance.

Under Abū al-ᶜAbbās and his successor, al-Manṣūr, the new imperial elite was gathered around the caliph in Iraq, at a series of palace cities in or near Qaṣr Ibn Hubayra (near Wāsiṭ), Anbār and Kufa, each of which was referred to as Madīnat al-Hāshimiyya ('The City of the Hashimites').[9] Then, in 762, al-Manṣūr gave a more permanent architectural expression to the centralising character of his empire when he founded the new palace-city of Madīnat al-Salām ('The City of Salvation' or 'City of Peace') at Baghdad, on the Tigris. Baghdad remained the seat of the calipate for the next thirty years. It was continually expanded through the addition of new palaces and garrisons and the unplanned sprawl of private suburbs. Even in the twelve years after 796–7, when the capital moved to al-Rāfiqa in north Mesopotamia, Baghdad remained almost as important as the official capital; the caliph returned there in 809.

The Umayyads had been comparatively mobile – as we have seen, many Umayyads acceded to power at one of the staging-posts of their peripatetic Syrian court.[10] Umayyad accession and succession ceremonial had primarily

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involved the Umayyad family, the Syrian army and delegations from their predominantly Arab allies in the provinces. The Abbasid situation was quite different. After 762 the new capital of Madīnat al-Salām absorbed Arabs and non-Arabs alike into the new ruling elite. It was founded as the single, central location for imperial and monarchic ceremonial on a grand scale: the construction of the palaces of Qaṣr al-Dhahab at its centre and then, outside its walls, of Qaṣr al-Ruṣāfa, in *c.* 768, and Qaṣr al-Salāma/ᶜĪsābādh al-Kubrā, in *c.* 781,[11] created larger and larger theatres for public display. The expansion of the mosque at Madīnat al-Salām and monumental building projects at a new Syrian capital at al-Rāfiqa indicate that this trend continued under Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–809).[12]

The pledges of allegiance to Abbasid caliphs and their *wulāt al-ᶜuhūd* are described in much more static and hierarchical terms than those to the Umayyads: the new caliph always repaired to the Iraqi capital to receive the pledge of allegiance there from the court. Other members of the ruling dynasty, other branches of the Abbasid family and the wider Hāshimite clan tended to comprise the most senior echelons, followed by the senior army commanders and administrators. After them came the personal clients of the caliph, scribes and servants – 'those who remained from the elite and the masses (*al-khāṣṣa wa'l-ᶜāmma*)'.[13] In many cases, different sections of the elite took part in different rituals, with large assemblies in the mosque being preceded, or followed, by smaller gatherings in the adjacent palace. The same court hierarchies are reflected in many of the traditions about the succession, as well as in copies of documents from the period that preserve lists of witnesses to pledges of allegiance.

Ranked hierarchies of officials are often listed in the Sasanian inscriptions and are referred to in Abbasid-era literary sources about the Sasanian court.[14] Khurasani political culture, and the growing influence of Iraqi and Iranian scribes on court protocol, no doubt shaped the patterns of Abbasid ceremonial, whence the 'keeper of the prayer-mat' (*ṣāḥib al-muṣallā*)[15] and 'keeper of the shawls' (*ṣāḥib al-ṭayālisa*),[16] in addition to the late Marwanid 'master of the curtain' (*ṣāḥib al-sitr*).[17] However, the composition of the Abbasid court also reflects the distinctive situation of the post-revolutionary caliphate, in which the ruling elite that surrounded the caliph was composed of competing elements that were culturally and ideologically diverse. In early Abbasid caliphal ceremonial, the status of these groups and of individuals was a function of their loyalty to the person of the caliph, 'God's Shadow on Earth', who bestowed patronage, privileges and honours on the imperial elites.

Although Iranian political culture influenced the forms of many aspects of Abbasid government, Abbasid claims to power and authority were firmly rooted in the evolving Arabic–Islamic monotheist tradition. Islam was the

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religio-political paradigm within which the eighth-century Arab–Muslim elite understood their hegemonic place in the world; the revolution was to achieve justice through reform based on Islamic principles. Indeed, the revolutionary organisation and then its historians explicitly looked back to the foundation of the Prophetic commmunity at Medina.[18] Even the Khurasani converts in the revolutionary armies had pursued their aspirations through conversion to the new religion of Islam, however vaguely understood, and conversion was a prerequisite for advancement in the army or the bureaucracy. Thus, the Abbasids looked to the Qurʾān and the historical memory of the life of the Prophet in order to legitimate their own power and defuse or co-opt alternative views of the same tradition.

In their cultivation of links with the emerging community of religious traditionists (*ʿulamāʾ*) and legal scholars (*fuqahāʾ*) the Abbasids sought to co-opt the developing Islamic sciences (*ʿulūm*) of law (*fiqh*) and quranic exegesis (*tafsīr*) in order to assert the legitimacy of their claim to the imamate.[19] Attempts to secure the support of Islamic scholars and holy men, with their pious, legalistic and communitarian values, had the potential to be at variance with the Iranian political tradition of many of the Abbasids' military supporters, with its lavish court ceremonial, its use of gold, silk, perfume and wine as the luxurious symbolic markers of aristocratic status and its tradition of dynastic succession to power. However, the evolution of Islamic society, and the growing significance of the religious authorities of the cities of Iraq and elsewhere, meant that the co-option of their legal and spiritual authority was an important means by which the new dynasty might enhance its legitimacy. For the scholars, association with the caliphs was a route to greater influence, although such close associations with power met with censure in some quarters.

'Islamic' criticisms from a 'proto-Shiʿite' standpoint were particularly threatening to the new dynasty. The revolution had been proto-Shiʿite in that it called for a leader from the Prophet's family. Although this could be understood to imply membership of the Prophet's immediate kin-group (that is, descent from the Prophet's great-grandfather, Hāshim), the Prophetic family could also be defined much more narrowly, denoting only direct descent from his son-in-law and first cousin, ʿAlī. As a result, Abbasid policy towards the descendants of ʿAlī oscillated between attempts to co-opt their support and episodes of persecution.[20] At the same time, their public proclamations fluctuated between attempts to assert 'Alid' legitimacy by claiming to have inherited ʿAlī's authority by personal testament (*naṣṣ*) and attempts at assertions of first a 'Hashimite', and then an 'Abbasid', interpretation of religio-political legitimacy in which membership of the Banū Hāshim and then descent from al-ʿAbbās were the source of their claim to the caliphate.[21]

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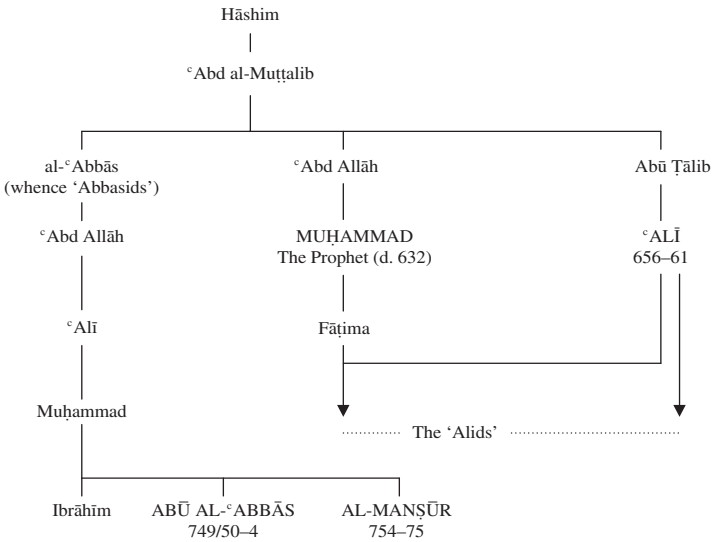


Fig. 2 Genealogical table of the Banū Hāshim (the Prophet and the caliphs appear in capitals, the latter with regnal years).

DYNASTIC SUCCESSION, APPROVAL AND COVENANT IN THE EARLY ABBASID PERIOD

The dominance of the 'proto-Shiᶜite' political idiom after 750 had particular consequences for Abbasid rhetoric about the succession. In many rebellions before 750, the idea of *al-riḍā* ('the chosen one') had been associated with the concept of *shūrā*, or 'formal consultation', in the choice of the caliph, and there is some evidence of attempts at a *shūrā* to select the best candidate from the wider clan-group of the Banū Hāshim before and during the Abbasid revolution.[22] However, whatever the precise circumstances of Abū al-ᶜAbbās' accession in 749/50 (and the post-revolutionary sources are unclear on this point), the idea of *shūrā* in the sense of the formal choice of a leader through a consultative assembly of the Muslims quickly disappeared, to be replaced by patrimonial and dynastic notions of succession within the 'Prophet's family'.[23] Within the Abbasid dynasty, the line of succession was secured by the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* – the taking of the pledge of allegiance to a nominated successor during the lifetime of the incumbent caliph. However, elective notions continued to be associated with this pledge of allegiance to the caliph's successor, not in calls for a formal *shūrā*, but in the more nebulous sense that 'approval' (*riḍā*) by God would coincide with that of the Muslims.

This idea of 'approval' was used both to justify the selection of a particular individual for the succession, and by his opponents in challenges to that

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nomination. The tension between the capacity of the pledge of allegiance to express this elective idea (*riḍā*) and its potential to express a binding contractual agreement before God (*ʿahd*) gave a particular character to conflict over the succession in the Abbasid caliphate. A potential successor would be promoted as the legitimate choice of the Muslims, and particularly of the revolutionary army. Consensus and agreement (*ijtimāʾ* and *riḍā*) were emphasised as the basis for the candidate's legitimacy, alongside their inherited qualification as the 'best and choicest' (*khayra wa-ṣafwa*) of the progeny of the 'family of the Prophet' (*ahl bayt al-nabī*) – meaning (for the Abbasids, not their Alid rivals) the Banū Hāshim in theory, and the Banū ʿAbbās in practice.[24] Much of this rhetoric also invoked the memory of the Prophet's life in order to assert the connection between the Abbasids and Prophetic authority.

As in the Marwanid period, the title 'the Son of the Commander of the Faithful' (*ibn amīr al-muʾminīn*) was associated with a claim to the succession by virtue of descent from a former caliph and the title 'Possessor of/Successor to the Covenant' (*walī al-ʿahd*) with a right to it through formal recognition as his successor. Under the Abbasids, *walī al-ʿahd* was the title of an heir who had formally received the pledge of allegiance as the incumbent caliph's successor at the Abbasid capital.[25] Once a place in the succession was so secured, rival factions within the Abbasid imperial elite faced the difficulty of undoing a covenant (*ʿahd*) made before God that in some sense reflected God's will as expressed by His caliph, His army and His community (*riḍā*). However, the same notion of the will of the Muslims and God's approval of their will could also be used in order to justify a change to the succession: in the first generation of Abbasid rule, when the second caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754–75) wanted to secure the succession for his son al-Mahdī against the existing claims of his nephew, the *walī al-ʿahd*, ʿĪsā b. Mūsā, he invoked *riḍā*; in the next generation, al-Mahdī's son Hārūn al-Rashīd used his claim to *riḍā* against his half-brother, the *walī al-ʿahd*, Mūsā al-Hādī.

Anxiety about the consequences of factional competition for control of the caliphate is reflected in the ceremonial innovations directed at securing unity on the question of the succession. The most important development was the invention of a formal ritual of *khalʿ al-nafs* ('abdication'), by which a *walī al-ʿahd* might formally divest himself of his place in the succession and pledge allegiance to a new candidate who took his place. This was enacted through the publicly witnessed renunciation of claims and pledging of allegiance, recorded in a written contract document, witnessed by members of the elite and signed and sealed by the former *walī al-ʿahd*. The introduction of this means by which the succession might be dissolved raised the stakes of court politics by weakening the pledge of allegiance as an instrument of public law; disaffected groups could always promote a new candidate and have his rival disown the caliphate. As competition

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over the succession became more intense, the rituals by which the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* was contracted became much more elaborate. When Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–809), who had come to power through what may have amounted to a coup, came to organise the succession, binding conditional agreements were drawn up between his sons al-Amīn and al-Maᵓmūn. Solemn ceremonies at the *ḥajj* of 802 (the 'Meccan Settlement') and at Qarmāsīn/Kirmānshāh in 805 bound the two *walī al-ᶜahd*s to respect one another's rights to the succession.[26] The attempt failed disastrously, but it was a rational response to the dynamics of conflict over the succession in the Abbasid empire.

PROVINCIAL POLITICS AND DYNASTIC SUCCESSION

The support of the army was crucial to securing the succession. Successors to the caliphate, and potential successors, were appointed to plenipotentiary military and administrative posts on the frontiers, which gave them the military power to secure the succession against rivals and also fostered the loyalty of the frontier armies to the imperial dynasty. Thus, in the late 750s, al-Manṣūr appointed al-Mahdī to the governorship of Khurasan, with command over the eastern armies; in the 770s and 780s, al-Mahdī's sons al-Hādī and al-Rashīd were given governorships that included commands on the north-eastern and western frontiers, respectively; in the 790s, under Hārūn al-Rashīd, the caliphate was split between al-Amīn and al-Maᵓmūn, with al-Amīn in Iraq and the west and al-Maᵓmūn in the east (and, after 805, al-Muᵓtamin in the north-west). In at least two cases, the *walī al-ᶜahd*'s provincial capital was named after him: Rayy became al-Muḥammadiyya in 764, after the formal proclamation of Muḥammad al-Mahdī as the *walī al-ᶜahd*; al-Hārūniyya was founded on the Syrian frontier by Hārūn al-Rashīd after his appointment to the *thughūr* in 779.[27] Leadership of the *ḥajj* also became an exclusive right of the ruling dynasty, reinforcing the religious legitimacy of the caliph and his *walī al-ᶜahd*.

Although the Umayyads had appointed their sons and their nominated successors to the *ṣāᵓifa* and the *ḥajj*, and many of them had been associated with government of particular regions within the metropolitan province of Syria, there was no Umayyad precedent for the allocation of ongoing administrative responsibility to large, provincial regions of the caliphate to those of the caliph's sons in line for the succession. Precedents from the Roman and Sasanian empires provide closer parallels for the Abbasid situation and, given the importance of Khurasan in the revolution and the dynasty's dependence on Iranian soldiers and bureaucrats, it makes sense to see a Sasanian background to early Abbasid practice.[28]

Khurasan was a province of crucial importance in succession politics: heirs were often initially recognised as such by Khurasani troops before their formal

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recognition at Baghdad, and the support of the Khurasani military was often critical to their success.[29] Indeed, the history of the early Abbasid period can be seen in terms of tension between autonomous provincial power and centralised empire, in which the local elites of Khurasan either sought power in Iraq, or sought greater independence from Iraqi domination. The impulse for formal recognition of a candidate for the succession could come either from the imperial centre, where an existing elite sought to perpetuate their power, or from those excluded from power (often with connections to provincial movements for greater autonomy). Given the agnatic basis of Arabian and Iranian culture, and the absence of a culture of primogeniture, the pattern of conflict was, predictably between uncles and nephews and between brothers. Hārūn al-Rashīd's 'Meccan Settlement' of 802 sought to prevent conflict between his two sons and their respective Iraqi, 'imperial', and Khurasani, 'provincial' supporters. The 'fourth civil war' that followed (811–19) brought about another transformation in the structure of the caliphate and can be seen as the beginning of the decline of Abbasid imperial power.

Because of the great changes that took place after Hārūn al-Rashīd's caliphate, Part III concludes on the eve of his death, in 809. The first chapter (Chapter 10) outlines the invention of Abbasid ceremonial of succession and accession in the reigns of al-Manṣūr (r. 754–75) and his son and successor, al-Mahdī (r. 775–85). Chapter 11 examines the succession crisis that followed al-Mahdī's death and Hārūn al-Rashīd's attempt to negotiate a succession acceptable to the provincial and metropolitan elites of the empire. Chapter 12 analyses the 'dispositive documents' that were used to manage the succession in each generation. These texts are important evidence of the formative developments in political ritual and theory that took place in early Abbasid Iraq.

NOTES

1. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 83.
2. In emphasising the importance of the indigenous, Iranian population, I follow, among others, Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*; Daniel, *Political and Social History*; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Mawlā' (P. Crone); Agha, *Revolution*.
3. See now Robinson, 'Violence'.
4. Ṭab., iii, 87–8, 388–9; cf. Yaq., ii, 436, 468; Mas., iv, §2370, §2435 (vi, 156–7, 224–5). He is hereafter referred to as al-Manṣūr for clarity.
5. Bal., iii, 192 = Bal.(D), iii, 218; Daniel, *Political and Social History*, 109.
6. See above, p. 122. On the changing structures of the Syrian Umayyad army, see Kennedy, *Armies*, esp. 18–23, 30–5, 47–50.
7. On which, see Kennedy, *Armies*, 96ff.; Crone, *Political Thought*, 97ff.
8. Or 'eunuchs', many of whom became powerful courtiers, officials and commanders: *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Khāṣī' (C. Pellat; A. K. S. Lambton; C. Orhonlu).

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9. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Hāshimiyya' (J. Lassner).
10. See above, p. 136.
11. On al-Ruṣāfa, see below, Ch. 10, n. 90. For ʿĪsābādh, see Ṭab., iii, 502.
12. Allan, 'New additions', 19–20.
13. Ṭab., iii, 472–3.
14. (Pseudo-) al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Tāj*, 21ff.; Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, 183ff.
15. Ṭab., iii, 367, 813, 576–7; Jah., 100.
16. Bal, iii, 293 = Bal.(D), iii, 333.
17. Grabar, 'Cérémonies', 55.
18. Lassner, 'ʿAbbasid *Dawla*', 262ff.
19. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 83ff.; Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 147ff.
20. Crone, *Slaves*, 68–9; Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 198ff.
21. Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 98–9; Crone, *Political Thought*, 89ff.
22. Crone, 'On the meaning', 96–102.
23. Crone, '*Shūrā*', 26ff.
24. e.g. IAṬ, 128b; Ṣaf., iii, 147.
25. Kimber, 'Succession', 430, 442–3; see further below, p. 208.
26. For the term 'Meccan Settlement', see Kimber, 'Meccan settlement'.
27. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Hārūniyya' (T. H. Weir); Bonner, 'Hārūnābād', 174–5.
28. Christensen, *L'Iran*, 102–3.
29. Cf. Daniel, *Political and Social History*, 175; Kimber, 'Meccan settlement', 74–5.

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CHAPTER

10

THE CONSOLIDATION OF ABBASID POWER: AL-MANṢŪR AND AL-MAHDĪ (754–785)

Al-Manṣūr ruled for just over twenty-one years, from about 10 June 754 until about 7 October 775.[1] For much of his reign, his authority was far from secure. Continued upheaval across the caliphate appears to reflect the dislocation caused by the revolution and its aftermath: there were rebellions in the name of descendants of the Prophet in Medina and Basra in the autumn of 762, and syncretist revolts, rooted in pre-Islamic Iranian religion, broke out in Khurasan, such as those led by Sunbādh (755) and Ustādhsīs (767). The Abbasid army itself was also prone to unruly millenarian and messianic fervour, and so the ceremonial of al-Manṣūr's reign was directed not only at legitimating a dynasty that had just seized power, but also at containing and directing religious enthusiasm among the troops who had installed it.

Al-Manṣūr also faced the problem of rivalry within the Abbasid family: his accession was challenged by his paternal uncle ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī, whom he defeated and imprisoned in 754–5 and killed in 764. This was a military turning-point in al-Manṣūr's promotion of a 'Manṣūrid' claim to the caliphate, to the exclusion of other branches of the Abbasid family, notably those of his paternal uncles. The political battle lasted much longer, and was fought against al-Manṣūr's nephew ʿĪsā b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, who had widely recognised claims to the succession after al-Manṣūr.

If the ambitions of al-Manṣūr for his son Muḥammad al-Mahdī (and thus also the ambitions of those whose fortunes were tied to this 'Manṣūrid' branch of the dynasty) were to be fulfilled, ʿĪsā b. Mūsā had to be replaced by Muḥammad al-Mahdī. In a process that recalls Hishām's attacks on his nephew, al-Walīd b. Yazīd, but that ended very differently, ʿĪsā b. Mūsā was progressively marginalised at court and then formally placed after al-Mahdī in the succession.

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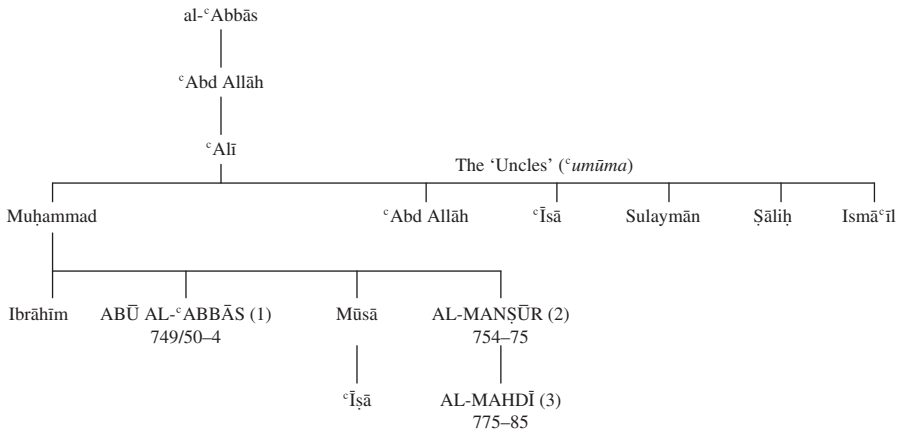


Fig. 3 Genealogical table of the first Abbasid caliphs (caliphs appear in capitals with their regnal years; the numbers in parentheses indicate the sequence of their reigns).

REARRANGING THE SUCCESSION: PREPARING FOR THE *BAYᶜA* TO AL-MAHDĪ AS *WALĪ AL-ᶜAHD*

Ten years elapsed between al-Manṣūr's accession in 754 and the taking of the *bayᶜa* to his son al-Mahdī, in 764, which placed al-Mahdī ahead of his cousin ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā in the succession. Although al-Mahdī was about 13 in 754, and thus perhaps a little too young to be made *walī al-ᶜahd*, the ten-year wait is best explained by political exigencies. In 754 al-Manṣūr's accession was not secure. Even after 755, when he had defeated ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜAlī and had assassinated the Khurasani leader, Abū Muslim, al-Manṣūr had to act cautiously. ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā had been formally nominated as a successor by Abū al-ᶜAbbās, and many of the wider Abbasid family would oppose a change in the succession in favour of a 'Manṣūrid' line. Furthermore, ᶜĪsā appears to have had some support in the revolutionary heartland of Khurasan.[2]

The revolutionary army stationed in Iraq, and the 'clients' personally tied to the caliph, were an obvious counterweight to the 'uncles' and to ᶜĪsā's allies in Khurasan. Much of the decade 754–64 was spent cultivating their support for al-Mahdī, while seeking to undermine ᶜĪsā's support in the east and extending al-Mahdī's influence there. Al-Manṣūr's use of ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā against Rāwandiyya extremists within the Abbasid army in 758–9 may have been a deliberate policy to alienate the troops from his son's rival in the succession.[3] The ideas of these 'extremist' Abbasid supporters are not well attested in the sources, but they seem to have included a tendency to attribute divine status to the caliphs. While ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā was fighting this potentially unpopular campaign against internal

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opposition in Khurasan, al-Mahdī was appointed to an eastern governorship. Based in Rayy, in the Jibāl, al-Mahdī's responsibility for the jihad on the frontiers developed his connections with the army. The adoption of the *laqab*s, or titles, 'al-Manṣūr' and 'al-Mahdī' ('the One Made Victorious' and 'the Rightly Guided One') was also an attempt to manage and exploit the messianic expectations that had driven the Abbasid Revolution, especially among the Khurasani forces.

In 762 (144 H) al-Mahdī progressed west from his eastern frontier province, via Nihawand and al-Ḥīra, where he married Rayṭa b. Abī al-ᶜAbbās, the daughter of the first Abbasid caliph and foster-daughter of the senior administrator, Khālid b. Barmak.[4] Then he led the *ḥajj* with al-Manṣūr. According to the Meccan *qāḍī* al-Nahrawālī (d. 1582), the foundation inscription of a ruined 'mosque of the pledge of allegiance' (*masjid al-bayᶜa*), founded at Mecca in 762, could still be read in his time:

> ᶜAbd Allāh, the Commander of the Faithful, may Almighty God honour him, ordered the construction of this Mosque of the Pledge, which was the first pledge the Messenger of God contracted at the time of his covenant with al-ᶜAbbās b. ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib. It was constructed in 144 H (761–2).[5]

If this very late, but local, report is accurate, then the foundation of the Mosque of the Pledge was a public assertion of the role of the Abbasids' eponymous ancestor in the establishment of the Muslim polity. It was also a clear statement of the connection between al-Manṣūr, his son and intended successor, al-Mahdī – both present in Mecca for the pilgrimage in 762 – and the first pledges of allegiance to the Prophet Muḥammad himself. These pledges, and the role of al-ᶜAbbās at them, are prominent in the biography of the Prophet by Ibn Isḥāq (d. 767), which was sponsored by al-Manṣūr.[6] The Mosque of the Pledge formed part of a programme of 'Manṣūrid' building projects, among which the new capital, Madīnat al-Salām, begun in the following July (145/762), was the pre-eminent example. Had rebellion in the Ḥijāz and Iraq not interrupted his plans, it seems likely that al-Manṣūr would have moved to proclaim his son as his heir at this point, rather than in 764.

An extensive historiography developed around the build-up to the rearrangement of the succession at the metropolitan court. Al-Balādhurī gives six accounts.[7] Al-Ṭabarī presents seven main narratives, many of which include material parallel to al-Balādhurī's; each attributes ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā's conceding of the succession to al-Mahdī to different factors.[8] The extensive circulation of stories describing pressure on ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā from various elements at court may reflect an attempt to transfer the responsibility for the breaking of oaths from al-Manṣūr

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to his advisers, and to legitimate the change in revolutionary terms as *riḍā*, the 'approval' of the Muslims. However, the accounts also reflect real support for al-Mahdī, without which the transfer of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* to him would have been impossible.

Some traditions attribute an influential role to either the increasingly powerful administrator Khālid b. Barmak, by now (foster) father-in-law to al-Mahdī,[9] or to another senior courtier, Salm b. Qutayba.[10] Khālid certainly seems to have been instrumental in organising the process.[11] The key constituency was the Khurasani army in Iraq, which cajoled and intimidated ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā into agreeing to place al-Mahdī ahead of him in the succession.[12] The Manṣūrid loyalist 'uncle' ᶜĪsā b. ᶜAlī also seems to have played a prominent role in influencing his great nephew.[13] At the same time, al-Manṣūr withdrew ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā's privileges as the second most senior figure at court, having him enter after al-Mahdī as merely one among the senior Abbasids and having al-Mahdī sit in the position of honour immediately to the right of the caliph.[14] ᶜĪsā was also removed from the governorship of Kufa.[15] Other accounts suggest more nefarious attempts to remove him: ᶜĪsā was sent on dangerous campaigns; there were plots to discredit him at court and to poison him.[16]

Poetry declared the caliph's intentions at the new palace-city. A former panegyrist of the Marwanids, Abū Nukhayla, sought to rehabilitate himself by promoting al-Mahdī's claim on the caliphate.[17] In one *khabar*, al-Manṣūr also has Abū Nukhayla recite his poems on the day of the actual *bayᶜa* to al-Mahdī.[18] Abū Nukhayla's poems are typical of the genre: the insignia of the staff and cloak are deployed as synecdoches for the caliphate; there is an emphasis on the noble lineage of the heir.

> Yes, we shelter in your protection. Rest your staff on Muḥammad (al-Mahdī),
> Your son, who, whatever you entrust to him, can bear the responsibility. The best man to protect it is the nearest in kin to you.
> You are he, O son of the namesake of Aḥmad, O son of the noble Arab house,
> Yes, the trustworthy of the Eternal One, it is you who was appointed by the Lord of the mosque.
> . . . . .
> Clothe him yourself in the mantle you choose and he is ready to wear, for it is the mantle of the garlanded, leading horse.[19]

The second poem also addresses the specific problems faced by al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī, by emphasising that the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* can be passed among the Abbasids – the implication being that ᶜĪsā was merely its guardian while al-Mahdī was growing up:

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The heir apparent to it most fortunately was ᶜĪsā, and he let it slide (*fa-zahlafahā*) to Muḥammad (al-Mahdī).
And, before ᶜĪsā, it was gradually surrendered from one to another, so that it may be passed from hand to hand
Among you, and it rests there while it is increasing and we approve (*raḍīnā*) with the beardless youth.

In an allusion to Jarīr's poem on the succession of ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. al-Walīd, the first and second lines try to suggest a precedent for the passing-on of the covenant of the succession between living members of the ruling dynasty where none in fact existed.[20] In the last line, al-Mahdī's fulfilment of revolutionary expectation is emphasised through the use of the verb *raḍiya* ('to approve', 'be pleased'). This is a theme developed elsewhere in the poem, where the desires of the people that the ruler 'stretch out' his hand for the pledge of allegiance are linked to the familiar water imagery of the *niᶜma* and *baraka* of the righteous ruler, which can also be bestowed by 'stretching out' (cf. Q 26.133).[21]

So, if we hear the clamour, 'Stretch out! Stretch out!' (your hand for the pledge and thus to bestow blessing), it will be for us like the torrent of rain for a thirsty horse.

As at the nomination of Yazīd by Muᶜāwiya 100 years earlier, court poetry allowed the caliph to put some distance between himself and his determination to see his son succeed him. However, whereas Miskīn had spoken in terms of *mashwara*, that is of consultation among tribal elders,[22] Abū Nukhayla invoked the rhetoric of the recent revolution in which the 'approval' (*riḍā*) of the Muslims as a whole coincided with the will of God. And, whereas Miskīn promoted the lineage of the Banū Ḥarb, Abū Nukhayla used 'Aḥmad' of the noble Arab house to imply not only Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-ᶜAbbās, but also the Prophet himself.[23] He spoke before an audience that was well prepared; the established army commanders, bureaucrats and clients of al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī saw al-Mahdī as the most secure source of continued patronage.

THE CEREMONY AT MADĪNAT AL-SALĀM IN 764

In 764 ᶜĪsā was persuaded to relinquish first place in the succession to al-Mahdī. The ceremony is described by al-Ṭabarī on the authority of an anonymous army commander, who is said to have been present in the *maqṣūra* in the mosque of Madīnat al-Salām (that is, in the enclosed section at the front of the prayer-hall reserved for the ruler and his entourage).[24] Al-Mahdī's Syrian secretary, Abū

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ᶜUbayd Allāh Muᶜāwiya, came out into the *maqṣūra* from the adjoining palace buildings, accompanied by some of the Khurasani army. ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā read out a document in which he renounced his claim to the succession, prompted when he hesitated by Abū ᶜUbayd Allāh. The document was then sealed and witnessed. Afterwards ᶜĪsā and others went into the palace.

The anonymous informant emphasises that ᶜĪsā's compliance was bought by al-Manṣūr. It seems likely that al-Manṣūr did indeed give ᶜĪsā and his sons enormously valuable ceremonial robes; the symbolic act of the formal bestowal of robes (*khilᶜa*) implied acceptance of the ruler's authority, and here it stood as symbolic payment for ᶜĪsā's renunciation of his position.[25] In another account of the same occasion, al-Manṣūr made a *khuṭba* thanking ᶜĪsā and guaranteeing his place in the succession, before giving him gifts and estates, including the governorship of al-Ahwāz, Kufa and its *ṭasāsīj* (lands subject to specific tax regulations).[26] In fact, ᶜĪsā seems to have been demoted from his position as governor of Kufa in the year in which he surrendered his claim to the succession.[27] However, both accounts are agreed that the deposition of ᶜĪsā and the *bayᶜa* to al-Mahdī were public rituals performed at the new mosque of Madīnat al-Salām; the implication is that the people of the palace-city were present in the mosque both to witness the deposition and to affirm their allegiance to al-Mahdī. Indeed, al-Yaᶜqūbī remarks that 'no one remained who had not entered into the *bayᶜa*'.[28]

This *bayᶜa* to al-Mahdī as al-Manṣūr's successor was one of the first major ceremonies to take place at Madīnat al-Salām. None of al-Manṣūr's city survives. However, extensive literary accounts, and other surviving contemporaneous architecture, do allow us to reconstruct the buildings. The vast circular walls that enclosed the garrisons, treasuries, prison and markets were not yet finished in 764, but the towering mosque–palace complex at its centre was.[29] Madīnat al-Salām's centralised round plan, oriented on the points of the compass, was an architectural expression of legitimate Islamic world rule in Iranian style: its plan evokes the round Iranian palace-cities of the first Sasanian kings; one might also imagine that the Iranian Buddhist background of Khālid b. Barmak influenced the circular design.[30] The public ceremony, which took place in the square, hypostyle mosque, could have involved hundreds, even thousands, of people. The mosque is said to have measured 200 cubits by 200 (about 100m × 100m, or 10,000m^2).[31] This is comparable to the largest Umayyad congregational mosques. The much smaller inner circle of the Abbasid elite gathered in the adjacent palace, Qaṣr al-Dhahab, before the public ceremony, and returned there afterwards. This palace, inspired by Iranian antecedents, was externally an impressive structure: visible from all Baghdad, 400 cubits square (about 200m × 200m) and capped by a dome 80 cubits (about 40m) above the ground.[32] However, it contained numerous rooms, and so the two *majlisān*, or 'audience halls', at its centre are said to have

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had a far smaller capacity than the congregational mosque: they were both 20 cubits square (about 10m × 10m, or 100m^2) – the lower one capped by an internal dome, the higher roofed by the external dome. Such rooms were little larger than the relatively small reception rooms at Quṣayr ʿAmra or Mshatta. Each would have accommodated only a few dozen comfortably.[33] The contrast in scale between mosque and palace reflects the hierarchies of access to the caliph; only the *khāṣṣa* – the circle of intimates – gained personal access to him at the *majlis*, while the staged ceremonial of the pledge of allegiance at the mosque involved hundreds, or even thousands.

The promulgation of the pledge of allegiance in the provinces

Given the religious importance of elites in the Ḥijāz and the origins of the revolution in Khurasan, the wider constituency of Muslims in the provinces was an important audience.[34] In al-Ṭabarī's *History*, an otherwise unknown scribe states that Khālid b. Barmak was responsible for the letters decreeing that the pledge of allegiance to al-Mahdī be taken in the provinces.[35] A Baghdadi compiler of literary and historical texts, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (d. 892), includes a purported fragment of just such a letter in a chapter on appointments to the 'succession to the covenant' (*wilāyat al-ʿahd*) in his *Kitāb al-Manẓūm wa'l-manthūr* ('Book of Poetry and Prose').[36] Although it is a fragment and, like most copies of documents made by Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, lacks an *isnād*, its language and content match its purported context precisely.[37]

Like some later Umayyad letters, it is an iterative, rhetorical text, intended to be read out in public – a *khuṭba* by proxy.[38] It is addressed to the *maʿshar al-muslimīn* – 'the assembly of the Muslims'.[39] The idea of the covenant for the caliphate as the quranic 'completion of blessing' (*tamām niʿma*) is familiar from Umayyad texts – the will of God was fulfilled in the making of the covenant for the caliphate.[40] The terms in which the pledge of allegiance itself is described, with its quranic echoes in the use of the verb *istabshara* ('rejoice'), also recalls Umayyad material. However, what survives of the letter begins with an exhaustive list of the future caliph's merits in religion and leadership that is quite different from Umayyad rhetoric. Every conceivable virtue is attributed to 'al-Mahdī' – 'the rightly guided one': among the dozens of qualifying characteristics attributed to him are righteousness, piety, patience, cunning, maganimity, generosity, courage, sincerity and prudence. The list recalls an account of the decision by the Khurasani revolutionaries to seek 'the noblest, the most generous, and the most meritorious in respect of religion'.[41] The appeal was to *riḍā* ('choice') against the existing *ʿahd* ('covenant') for ʿĪsā b. Mūsā.

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The approval of the people (most likely, the Khurasanis) in turn reflects God's will: al-Mahdī 'is the chosen one for your government (*al-muṣṭanaᶜ li-wilāyatikum*),[42] and the one selected for your leadership and the unification of your concord (*ijtimāᶜ ulfa*), and the completion of God's blessing upon you.' The millenarian expectations of the revolution are fulfilled in him:

> Surely the name of al-Mahdī Muḥammad, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, and the name of his father, the era in which that was mentioned, the events which are related to it, the conquests which were mentioned that they would be made in the beginning of his rule (*amrihi*), and the outset of his time – we have seen them both and known them both, some of them bearing witness to others, connected to their circumstances, happening successively according to what is mentioned in the accounts about them, the first of them authenticating the last according to their ranks, their positions and the occasions in which they [take place]; nothing is precluded among them from anything following in close succession and connected, if God wills, and there is no power except in God . . .[43]

By giving the oath of allegiance to al-Mahdī, the Muslims were bringing about the *niᶜma* (blessing) of the age of plenty foretold in the traditions circulating about the Mahdī:

> So give the pledge of allegiance in the name of God, in accordance with his blessing (*baraka*), his agreement and his guidance, to Muḥammad, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful: a pledge of allegiance pleasing to God (*riḍwān min Allāh*), God willing, with purity in your intentions, soundness in your breasts, fulfilling fully and upright in the good of the handclasp which your right hands have contracted (*bi-khayr ṣafqa ṣafaqat ᶜalayhā aymānukum*), the most serious of them, God willing, and the most complete as to blessing (*niᶜma*), the best of them as to consequence, the most important of them as to position in obedience of God, the highest of them in excellence as to rank . . . for truly you – O assembly (*maᶜshar*) of Muslims – have begun in God's agreement with you (*qad akhadhtum fī tawfīq Allāh iyyākum*) and his guidance of you, the utmost edge of the affair in which God inspires you from your oath of allegiance to al-Mahdī, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, which will lead you to the blessings (*niᶜam*) which have been described and the signs (*al-ẓuhūr*) which have been mentioned.[44]

Both the Qurᵓān and exegetical traditions about the *bayᶜat al-Ḥudaybiya* are echoed in 'a pledge of allegiance pleasing to God (*riḍwān min Allāh*)'.[45] This allusion to one of the pledges of allegiance taken to the Prophet, and to the Abbasid revolutionary slogan, is significant. It appears to reflect the alignment

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of the Abbasid caliphs' claims with expectations about legitimacy among some of their Kufan and Khurasani followers, for whom the Prophet and his life had assumed a paradigmatic importance. The rhetoric finds analogues in the parallels between the accounts of the Prophet's pledges of allegiance at al-ᶜAqaba and accounts of the Abbasid revolutionary organisation and in the continued interest in this event manifested by the construction of the Mosque of the Pledge at Mecca.[46] The fragment concludes with another reference to the apocalyptic ideas behind the revolution: 'your oath of allegiance to al-Mahdī, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, which will lead you to the blessings (*niᶜam*) which have been described and the signs (*al-ẓuhūr*) which have been mentioned.'

Patronage of coinage also reflects competition over the succession. Al-Mahdī is the first candidate for the caliphal succession to be named on Islamic coins. Copper coins (*fulūs*) carrying the legend *al-Mahdī b. amīr al-muᵓminīn* ('al-Mahdī, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful') – a title used by claimants to the succession since Umayyad times[47] – struck on the frontier, at Bukhara and Samarqand, are dated 143/760–1, two years after al-Mahdī's appointment to a governorship in the east.[48] The first silver dirhams to bear the same legend were minted in Kirmān and Rayy from 145/762–3 until 148/765–6.[49] Rayy, the location of al-Mahdī's court, was named al-Muḥammadiyya on the coins after the ceremony at Madīnat al-Salām in 147/764. An unbroken sequence of these dirhams was issued until 158/774–5, the year of his accession to the caliphate.[50] The same coin type was also minted at Basra, Ṭabaristān and Samarqand in the east and al-ᶜAbbāsiyya in the west.[51] Between 152/769–70 and 155/771–2, coins with the same legend were also minted in Armenia and Arrān.[52] Copper coins bearing the same legend are even more widespread.[53]

The production of coinage in the early Abbasid state is not yet well understood. However, the first appearance of the title 'al-Mahdī' on the coins a few years before the date given for his nomination as *walī al-ᶜahd* in the literary sources, and then the more systematic production of the coins in regions under his governorship after 764–5, suggest a close connection between his nomination and the production of the coins. In particular, the 'Mahdist' coins struck in Armenia and Arrān in the early 770s suggest the importance of army commanders loyal to him. Armenia was outside al-Mahdī's eastern governorship, but one of al-Mahdī's commanders, Bakkār b. Muslim al-ᶜUqaylī, was transferred to Armenia from Khurasan at around this time; a loyal commander perhaps continued to pay his men in dirhams proclaiming al-Mahdī as the caliph's son and heir after his transfer away from the former governorate of the *walī al-ᶜahd*.[54] The coins appear to be evidence for the pattern of support for al-Mahdī within the provincial elite.

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THE *BAYᶜA* OF 768

In 768 the *bayᶜa* was given to al-Mahdī by the Baghdadi elite in person for the first time, when he returned to Baghdad from Khurasan. This was a triumphant arrival at the capital; al-Mahdī had been formally responsible for the eastern frontier since *c*. 758 and had just supervised a successful campaign against the Khurasani rebel, Ustādhsīs, in 767.[55] In some accounts, a new garrison and palace of Qaṣr al-Ruṣāfa had been built for al-Mahdī, opposite Madīnat al-Salām, on the east bank of the Tigris.[56] Given that al-Manṣūr had, unusually, chosen to take the *bayᶜa* to al-Mahdī at Baghdad in his son's absence in 764, the royal ritual of triumphant entry into the imperial city served as a public confirmation of al-Mahdī's status. The reception of the victorious monarch outside the city prior to his formal arrival within it has many ancient Near Eastern precedents and was a widely recognised right of kings, closely associated with rituals of acclamation and allegiance.[57]

In October or November 768, al-Ṭabarī reports, al-Mahdī came to Madīnat al-Salām and was met by 'many members of his family from Syria, Kufa, Basra and other places'.[58] Al-Mahdī and al-Manṣūr both distributed gifts and robes to the Abbasids, and some of them were appointed as al-Mahdī's companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and assigned annual allowances of 500 dirhams.[59] This was both a financial and a symbolic transaction; the generosity lavished upon the Abbasids, and the inclusion of some of them among al-Mahdī's *ṣaḥāba*, was an effort to buy their support for a *walī al-ᶜahd* who had been promoted by the army at the expense of the hopes of many of his relatives and whose claim to the succession depended upon the projection of a charismatic authority unique to him and his father.

In a separate report for the same year, al-Ṭabarī states that 'al-Manṣūr caused the pledge of allegiance to himself, to his son Muḥammad al-Mahdī after him, and to ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā after al-Mahdī, to be renewed (*jaddada*) by all the people of the house (*ahl al-bayt*) in his Friday assembly (*majlis*)'.[60] Since al-Mahdī arrived in Shawwāl/October–November, this *bayᶜa* must have taken place within twelve weeks of the ceremony of his arrival. Indeed, the two accounts probably reflect different aspects of the same event; the reconciliation of the rest of the Abbasid family, and the 'uncles' in particular, to the promotion of al-Mahdī by the army commanders. The renewal of the pledge of allegiance was of pressing importance because of its personal nature; the Abbasids needed to be compelled or cajoled into giving the pledge to al-Mahdī personally in order to reinforce the pledge given to him in his absence four years earlier. A story about the reluctance of one of the 'uncles', Ismāᶜīl b. ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-ᶜAbbās, governor of Wāsiṭ, to give the pledge of allegiance to al-Mahdī suggests resistance to the rearrangement

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of the succession in favour of al-Manṣūr's progeny ahead of a representative of another descendant of ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās. Ismāʿīl is said to have claimed that he had thought the call for the *bayʿa* voluntary, and so had not responded to it.[61]

In all three accounts, Near Eastern conventions of public conduct imbue the rituals (or, at least, the accounts of them) with their significance. Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī is said to have travelled to Kalawādhā, where he camped, a day's journey from Baghdad. He expected to be met by a welcoming party from the Abbasid family, but instead was greeted by a message from al-Manṣūr summoning him to court. Once there, he was received properly, and wisely made the required pledge of allegiance. The snub marked out Ismāʿīl as lacking the regal status of al-Manṣūr's son and heir, al-Mahdī, who received the honour of being met as a king by the Abbasid family (*ahl al-bayt*) outside the city. When the *bayʿa* was renewed, the Abbasids were said to have kissed the hands of al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī, but merely clasped that of ʿĪsā. The accounts may not reflect the exact course of events, but they certainly illustrate the heritage of the Near Eastern symbolism of royal victory in Islam and the significance attached to gesture and action in early Abbasid political culture.

The death of al-Manṣūr and the accession of al-Mahdī

Al-Manṣūr died in October 775, as he departed from Mecca after the *ḥajj* pilgrimage. In contrast with the situation on his own accession, in 754, the succession of his son, al-Mahdī, had been fixed for over ten years. Al-Mahdī enjoyed the support of many of the courtiers and the army and faced little if any effective opposition. Another contrast with 754 lies in the organisation of the funeral and the inauguration rituals. Whereas senior Abbasids were at the centre of events at the beginning of al-Manṣūr's reign,[62] the personal clients (*mawālī*) whom al-Manṣūr had cultivated as an alternative source of support, loyal to him alone, were very prominent in managing the transfer of power to his son. Although many senior Abbasid family members were present at the halting-place of Biʾr Maymūn, near Mecca, it was al-Rabīʿ b. Yūnus, al-Manṣūr's client and chamberlain (*ḥājib*), who presided over the pledge of allegiance to al-Mahdī, assisted by Rayyān, another of al-Manṣūr's clients.

There are four versions of the taking of the pledge of allegiance at the *ḥajj* campsite. Al-Ṭabarī gives three of them: one on the authority of 'one/some of the sources' (*qāla baʿḍuhum*),[63] a second recounted by a senior Arabian chief of Hāshimite descent, present at the *bayʿa*, Muḥammad al-Nawfalī (transmitted by his son ʿAlī),[64] and a third from al-Rabīʿ b. Yūnus himself, as transmitted by al-Haytham b. ʿAdī.[65] Al-Balādhurī's single account is from a secretary who is an

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authority for much of his early Abbasid material, ʿAbd Allāh b. Mālik al-Kātib.[66] The differences between the four stories suggest the vagaries of memory and oral testimony, but not wholesale invention. In all the accounts al-Rabīʿ b. Yūnus is a dominant figure, getting a renewal of the *bayʿa* from the Abbasid family without giving away the death of the caliph (although in one version he consults ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī about how to proceed) and then composing a suitable 'covenant' document to be read to the assembled court and commanders. The impression is that al-Rabīʿ was improvising: the last accessional *bayʿa* had taken place twenty-one years earlier and only the older members of the court could remember it.[67]

By combining the four sources one can get a picture of those present. The caliph's immediate entourage for the *ḥajj* was quite large. It should probably be thought of in terms of dozens, even scores, of people; two large tents could accommodate the leading figures in the ceremonies. Al-Rabīʿ states that he took the *bayʿa* from all the courtiers, the leading men and the chiefs who were in attendance (*khāṣṣatihi wa'l-awliyāʾ wa-ruʾasāʾ man ḥaḍarahu*).[68] This included many of the senior Abbasid family: ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī, ʿĪsā b. Mūsā, al-ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad, al-Qāsim b. al-Manṣūr, Ṣāliḥ b. al-Manṣūr, Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. ʿAlī, Mūsā b. al-Mahdī and Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās. Among the Banū Hāshim were the Alid, al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, and Muḥammad b. ʿAwn b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥārith b. al-ʿAbbās. The senior Qurashī, Muḥammad al-Nawfalī, has already been mentioned as a source for the occasion. A number of army commanders were also there: ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Māhān, Abū Ḥanīfa Ḥarb b. Qays, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Musayyab b. Zuhayr and Yaqṭīn b. Mūsā are referred to by name. The courtiers ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAyyāsh al-Manṭūf and Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Ṭūsī are also named, as are two *mawlā*s of al-Manṣūr, Rayyān and Manāra, and one of his father's *mawlā*s, al-Ḥasan al-Sharawī. Abū al-Anbār is the only one of al-Manṣūr's servants (*khuddām*) who is named.

Two ceremonies of allegiance took place. The first, in al-Manṣūr's tent, involved the Abbasid family and senior commanders and courtiers. The loyalist 'uncle', ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī, is said to have been summoned first, followed by ʿĪsā b. Mūsā. They were followed by 'the most senior and the oldest members of the family (*ahl al-bayt*) and then the rest'. Another *bayʿa* was then held in a large tent, to which the rest of the court, the non-Abbasid members of the Banū Hāshim and other army commanders were summoned. Muḥammad al-Nawfalī reports this second ceremony, which followed the announcement of the death to those encamped with the caliph and his family. Al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, the senior Alid, was the first of this second group to make the *bayʿa*, followed by the elderly Abbasid, Muḥammad b. ʿAwn, and then the narrator, Muḥammad al-Nawfalī. The pledges of allegiance were received by Mūsā b. al-Mahdī, al-Mahdī's young teenage son, on behalf of his absent father.[69] In the second, larger assembly Mūsā sat in the

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position of honour, beside the tent-pole, replacing al-Manṣūr's son and captain of the guard (*ṣāḥib al-shurṭa*), al-Qāsim b. al-Manṣūr.[70]

All the sources are agreed that al-Rabīᶜ used his position as chamberlain to conceal al-Manṣūr's death until the Abbasids and other senior figures had renewed their pledge of loyalty to al-Mahdī. Once the true situation had been revealed to the family, the death was announced to the assembled courtiers and commanders, provoking a rush for al-Manṣūr's tent. Order was restored by the servants (*khuddām*) and the courtier, ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜAyyāsh. The implication is that secrecy was required to manage a potentially volatile situation. This could be a later embellishment of what took place for dramatic effect (after all, it echoes the much more suspect account of the death of Sulaymān in 717, as well as Sasanian literary antecedents).[71] However, all the narratives are agreed on al-Rabīᶜ's ruse. Furthermore, to call the bluff of al-Rabīᶜ and ᶜĪsā b. ᶜAlī would have been very dangerous; when Muḥammad al-Nawfalī was asked by his neighbour in the tent if he thought 'the man' had died, he was prudently non-committal.[72]

In the accounts of ᶜAbd Allāh b. Mālik and Muḥamamd al-Nawfalī, ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā is represented as the most serious potential cause of trouble; in the former report he is made to swear second, after being tricked by al-Rabīᶜ and ᶜĪsā b. ᶜAlī; in the latter *khabar* he resists making the *bayᶜa* at all and does so only after being threatened by the army commanders and ᶜAlī b. ᶜĪsā b. Māhān in particular. The anonymous source, however, remembers ᶜAlī b. ᶜĪsā as himself refusing the *bayᶜa* because he resented giving allegiance to ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā at all (even after al-Mahdī) and swearing only after a scuffle. Al-Rabīᶜ makes no mention of this unrest. For the same reason, some accounts have the funeral prayers delegated to Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā, so that they would not be said by someone who aspired to the caliphate. (Other versions have either ᶜĪsā b. ᶜAlī or ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā saying them, as might be expected.) Both al-Rabīᶜ and Rayyān were present at the prayers; again this is indicative of the importance of the *mawālī* – the caliph's personal entourage of clients – at al-Manṣūr's court.

After the two *bayᶜa*s, al-ᶜAbbās b. Muḥammad and Sulaymān b. ᶜAlī went to Mecca to receive the pledge of allegiance there. Al-ᶜAbbās is said to have led the oath-taking, indicating his claim to superior status as a brother of the first Abbasid caliphs. The *bayᶜa* took place, as was customary in Mecca, between the *rukn* and the *maqām* (the east corner of the Kaᶜba in which the Black Stone is set, and the nearby rock where Abraham stood). Other members of the family (*ahl al-bayt*) went into the hinterland of Mecca and the camp of those on the *ḥajj* and took pledges of allegiance from the people there.

At the same time, two of the clients (*mawālī*) were despatched to Madīnat al-Salām with the caliphal insignia: Manāra took the caliph's seal, together with news of the death and of the *bayᶜa*, to al-Mahdī; al-Ḥasan al-Sharawī took the

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staff and cloak.[73] The separation of the insignia suggests a precaution against the loss of one of the messengers and against their story not being believed. Manāra arrived in Madīnat al-Salām either nine or twelve days later, and a ceremony was held there immediately at which either 'the people' (*ahl*) of the city,[74] or, more specifically, the commanders, Hashimites and courtiers (*al-quwwād wa'l-Hāshimiyyīn wa'l-ṣaḥāba*)[75] gave their pledges of allegiance to al-Mahdī (either on 15 Dhū al-Ḥijja/16 October or 18 Dhū al-Ḥijja/19 October).[76] This ceremony included the convening of a formal assembly (*majlis*), at which the 'people' (*al-nās*) greeted al-Mahdī as caliph (*yusallimūna*), among them the scholar Shabīb b. Shayba al-Tamīmī.[77] Al-ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad and Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. ʿAlī had also gone ahead of the main entourage, presumably to oversee these *bayʿa* ceremonies at Madīnat al-Salām.

The rest of the court had followed on behind (after a dispute about in front of whom the ceremonial spear should be carried, which escalated into a conflict between the senior commander, ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Māhān, and the new *walī al-ʿahd*, ʿĪsā b. Mūsā). According to al-Yaʿqūbī, al-Rabīʿ b. Yūnus and the rest of the court arrived nearly two weeks later, at the beginning of Muḥarram/late October–early November. Al-Mahdī held an assembly in the middle of Muḥarram/mid-November, at which he announced the return of confiscated property, the release of prisoners and the distribution of money and robes. Elegies were performed on the death of al-Manṣūr and panegyrics for the new caliph, al-Mahdī.[78]

Apparations, meteors and other omens are associated with al-Manṣūr's death.[79] These stories perhaps reflect the claims of al-Manṣūr to be a millennial world-ruler, whose death had a cosmological significance. It probably was quite a tense and unsettled moment. The careful attention to ceremonial roles in the accounts of the *bayʿa* indicates the importance of such public symbols: priority in seating, at the funeral, in giving the *bayʿa* itself and in the returning caravan of the court had the potential to cause conflict at the time because they were very public statements of the status of particular individuals. The secrecy that is said to have surrounded al-Manṣūr's death may be a *topos* of the death of kings and their correct management by viziers, but it is also a *topos* that reflects the delicacy of such liminal moments.[80] The conflicts and scuffles mentioned in the accounts of events at Biʾr Maymūn ultimately reinforce the impression that the clients and the Khurasani commanders were firmly behind al-Mahdī and hostile to ʿĪsā b. Mūsā; they may reflect actual events, or have been composed to illustrate the tensions in the succession.

The deposition (*khalʿ*) of ʿĪsā b. Mūsā by al-Mahdī in 776

Al-Mahdī moved quickly to remove ʿĪsā from the succession completely. According to a certain al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān, as cited by al-Ṭabarī, al-Mahdī

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replaced ʿĪsā with his own son Mūsā al-Hādī in a ceremony that took place on 14 November 776 (Thursday 27 Muḥarram 160), two years after his accession.[81] ʿĪsā was coerced into coming to Madīnat al-Salām from his near-exile outside Kufa.[82] Although al-Faḍl is a contemporary informant and usually a sober narrator,[83] the account favours al-Mahdī: the caliph is represented as bowing to the will of his supporters (*ruʾūs al-shīʿa*),[84] led by the Abbasid, Muḥammad b. Sulaymān (who had benefited from ʿĪsā's removal from the governorship of Iraq);[85] ʿĪsā protests at the oaths for his wealth and his family (that is, 'the oaths of the *bayʿa*'),[86] but is reassured by 'a number of legal scholars and judges' (*al-fuqahāʾ wa'l-qudāt ʿiddatan*). (Two, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUlātha and al-Zanjī b. Khālid al-Makkī, are named.[87]) Finally, he is bought out of his oaths with ten million dirhams and estates on the Upper Zāb and Kaskar.[88] The Abbasid party serves the same narrative function here as the various groups and individuals said to have been instrumental in 764: the caliph becomes the neutral instrument of popular feeling – of *riḍā*. Just as the anonymous commander's account suggests that ʿĪsā's greed made him unworthy of the succession in 764, poetry associated with the events of 776 develops this theme, punning on the root *khāʾ–lām–ʿayn*, which suggests both abdication (*khalʿ*) and the giving of ceremonial robes (*khilʿa*).[89]

Despite the tendentious perspective of his account, al-Faḍl gives a plausible description of the ceremony of deposition, which echoes the ceremony of 764. ʿĪsā had been held in al-Mahdī's recently completed palace of al-Ruṣāfa, while the 'negotiations' took place.[90] ʿĪsā gave his pledge of allegiance to al-Mahdī and Mūsā on Thursday morning. Then al-Mahdī took the pledges of the Abbasid family (*ahl al-bayt*) in the 'Courtyard of the Gates' (*Ṣaḥn al-Abwāb*). From the palace, they passed into the congregational mosque, where, according to custom, the caliph al-Mahdī stood on the top step of the *minbar*, with his heir, Mūsā al-Hādī, below him. Al-Mahdī gave a *khuṭba*, emphasising the congregation's choice of Mūsā al-Hādī as his successor, then they both sat to receive the handclasp of the *bayʿa*. ʿĪsā 'remained standing in his place' to hear his document of resignation read out, before agreeing to it and then, stepping up to the *minbar*, gave his *bayʿa* to al-Mahdī and Mūsā. He was followed by 'the family of al-Mahdī, in order of age' and then 'those of the courtiers (*aṣḥāb*) and the leading military commanders and men of the Abbasid party who were present'. Al-Mahdī then retired to the palace, where he gave ʿĪsā the promised rewards for giving up the *wilāyat al-ʿahd*. Yazīd b. Manṣūr, Al-Mahdī's maternal uncle,[91] received the *bayʿa* from those who remained behind from the elite and the people (*al-khāṣṣa wa'l-ʿāmma*). As at the nomination of al-Mahdī in 764, poetry was also performed praising the new *walī al-ʿahd*.[92]

Al-Ṭabarī cites the full text of the 'conditions upon himself which ʿĪsā wrote

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out' (*al-sharṭ alladhī katabahu ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā ᶜalā nafsihi*).[93] Its terms were as follows:

> I have entered into what the Muslims have entered into with regard to approval (*al-riḍā*) of Mūsā, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, and the pledge of allegiance to him, and the abandoning of my (claims, which were) upon their necks (and which) derived from the pledge of allegiance (*al-khurūj mimmā kāna lī fī riqābihim min al-bayᶜa*). I have made over to you freedom of action (*ḥall min dhālik wa-saᶜa*) for that, without restriction (*ḥaraj*) brought upon you, or upon anyone among you and the generality of the Muslims. I have no claim upon anything from that, (based upon) the past or in the future, nor desire, nor argument, nor treatise, nor is obedience required of (*al-ṭāᶜa ᶜalā*) anyone among you, nor upon the generality of Muslims, nor any pledge of allegiance – neither in the life of al-Mahdī Muḥammad the Commander of the Faithful, nor after him, nor after the possessor of the covenant of the Muslims (*walī ᶜahd al-Muslimīn*), Mūsā, nor while I am living, until I die.
>
> I hereby make the pledge of allegiance to (*wa-qad bāyaᶜtu li-*) Muḥammad al-Mahdī, the Commander of the Faithful, and to Mūsā, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, after him.[94]

As in 764, the understanding of loyalty and allegiance is contractual in the full sense of the word: ᶜĪsā has 'entered into' the pledge of allegiance and 'the renunciation of (his) claims', 'making over' to his followers 'freedom . . . without restriction'. However, it was also a public declaration of allegiance to al-Mahdī and his son Mūsā al-Hādī; that it was necessary to go to such lengths is an indication of the potential for factional conflict within the early Abbasid imperial elite.[95]

THE SUCCESSION TO AL-MAHDĪ

In 776 the faction associated with the new *walī al-ᶜahd*, Mūsā al-Hādī, had secured continued access to the resources of the caliphate after al-Mahdī's death. Revolutionary commanders in Baghdad and their sons (the Abnāᵓ, or 'Sons [of the Revolutionary Army]'), had been influential in pressing for al-Hādī's nomination. Commanders who are mentioned in this connection include Yazīd b. Mazyad, Abū Khālid al-Marwarrūdhī and ᶜAlī b. ᶜĪsā b. Māhān.[96] Other close associates of al-Hādī were his uncle, the Abbasid, Yazīd b. al-Manṣūr, ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜUlātha, 'Keeper of His Seal', and ᶜAbd Allāh b. Khāzim, 'Commander of His Guard'. Later, Abān b. Ṣadaqa, the former head of al-Mahdī's *dīwān al-rasāᵓil*, became al-Hādī's scribe and vizier.[97] Just as al-Mahdī himself had

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been given military and administrative responsibilities in the eastern caliphate in the 760s, so al-Hādī was set over a large eastern governorship; as his father had done, so he led the *ḥajj*.[98]

Those with political ambitions that might not be fulfilled by al-Hādī's future accession to the caliphate looked elsewhere for an alternative candidate. As with the successions to Abū al-ᶜAbbās and al-Manṣūr, there was some political advantage to the caliph in holding out the possibility that such hopes might be fulfilled; it was a means of securing the continued loyalty of those not likely to benefit from the accession of al-Hādī. At some time between 776 and 780, al-Ḥādī's brother Hārūn was given authority over parts of the western half of the caliphate. The Barmakid administrator Yaḥyā b. Khālid, the taxation official and scribe Thābit b. Mūsā, the *mawlā* al-Rabīᶜ b. Yūnus and al-Rabīᶜ's son the *mawlā* al-Faḍl b. al-Rabīᶜ were all said to have been supporters of Hārūn.[99]

According to the literary sources, Hārūn al-Rashīd was first appointed as a governor in the western provinces and then, in 782–3 (166 H), recognised as the second *walī al-ᶜahd* after al-Hādī. However, Richard Kimber has argued that the coinage evidence of al-Mahdī's reign indicates that Hārūn's support may have been widespread in his western governorship, but that he was never formally proclaimed as heir in Baghdad.[100] Whereas coins struck in the name of Hārūn refer to him simply as 'Hārūn, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful' (*ibn amīr al-muʾminīn*) – as those naming al-Mahdī as heir to al-Manṣūr had done in the 760s – coins struck in the name of Mūsā al-Hādī call him 'the Possessor of the Covenant of the Muslims' (*walī ᶜahd al-muslimīn*). This title was an innovation on the coinage, and Kimber argues that it was used as a mark of al-Hādī's superior status as an heir who had been acclaimed as the successor to the caliphate at Baghdad; Hārūn's faction was unable to secure a guarantee of his place in the succession.

In his *Book of Poetry and Prose*, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr records a fragment of a document said to have been written by Muḥammad b. Ḥajar, the secretary of the emir of Armenia.[101] This attribution to Muḥammad b. Ḥajar, and its concern with the pledge of allegiance to 'Hārūn, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful', locate the text on the north-west frontier and probably date it to the 770s or early 780s.[102] The document perhaps lends some support to Kimber's argument: al-Hādī (it appears) is the *walī al-ᶜahd* and Hārūn is the *ibn amīr al-muʾminīn*.

The document is also very good evidence for the terms in which Abbasid succession was understood during al-Mahdī's caliphate.

> He (God) brought out for them from the progeny (*dhurriyya*) of the Commander of the Faithful (i.e. al-Mahdī) a blessed and noble progeny (*dhurriyya mubāraka ṭayyiba*), derived from the new blessing of God upon this Community in this,

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> its appointed occasion and its time. He made them an example according to his model and adorned them with his exterior qualities. He placed among them the successor to His covenant (i.e. al-Hādī) and set in order their affairs for them and defended their frontiers for them.

The heirs' legitimacy derives from their being of the 'house of the Prophet' and the 'blessed and noble progeny' of al-Mahdī. The latter phrase recalls the quranic Yaḥya, son of Zakarīyā (John the Baptist, son of Zachariah); that is, the succession is both hereditary – within the agnatic group of the Banū Hāshim – and divinely inspired, like the miraculous birth of Yaḥyā (Q 3.38). The successor is a 'blessing' upon the community of the Muslims, sent 'in the appointed time'. However, a successor is also acclaimed by the Muslims themselves, as Hārūn is:

> Then He brought about a blessing for them, which united their hearts (*allafa bayna qulūbihim*) and spread mention of him among their nobility and masses (*khāṣṣatihim wa-ᶜāmmatihim*), while their gaze raised up toward him:[103] – the oath of allegiance to Hārūn, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, and what they hope for in this and aspire to – their unity in their religion and achieving the best of their hopes.

Again, the quranic language is pertinent – God's uniting of the believers' hearts is associated with their union under His covenant (Q 3.103; Q 8.63; cf. Q 9.60). The caliph is 'the best and choicest with respect to intellectual ability, perfection of grace and mighty strength' from the 'family of God's Prophet' (*ahl bayt nabiyyihi*). All blessings derive from him and, 'if the flock turn their gaze away from him, or pursue their sectarian tendencies without him, God will obliterate them'. This language recalls not only the claims made for the perfection of the Shiᶜite imams, but also the rhetoric of the Sasanian kings, as expressed in documents such as the Paikuli inscription.[104] Like the Roman emperor or the Sasanian King of Kings, the Abbasid caliph is both appointed by God and acclaimed and approved by 'the nobility and the masses', who receive divine blessing through continued loyalty to him.

The fragment ends with a shift into the first-person plural for the declaration of allegiance to Hārūn:

> The oath of allegiance to Hārūn has come to us at a time of thirst for it and inclination to it; our palms moved quickly to it and those of us who were present and those who were absent hurried to it and we have made the oath of allegiance pleasing to God (*bayᶜat riḍwān min Allāh*) with purity in our intentions and soundness in our breasts, rejoicing in our oath of allegiance, desiring what our oaths have

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> agreed upon (*ṣafaqat ᶜalayhi aymānunā*), recognising that it (*ᶜārifīn bi-annahā*) is the key of benefit and the beginning of grace and guidance to sublime good, the raising up of sincere advisers to happiness by it, doing our utmost with the fruit of the hearts for hope in it and we ask God that he does that which . . . [*The text ends here.*]

As in the letter about al-Mahdī's succession, much of the language about the pledge of allegiance is familiar from Marwanid poetry and prose. Again, however, that it is a 'pledge pleasing to God' (*bayᶜat riḍwān min Allāh*) is notable in that it is a phrase that echoes the slogans of the revolution, *sūrat al-Fatḥ* and thus the Prophet's pledge at al-Ḥudaybiya as it was remembered in Prophetic *Sīra*.

CONCLUSION

Under the early Abbasids, the idiom of Islamic rule shifted decisively from that of monotheist Arabian kingship to the universalist expression of divinely ordained imperial monarchy.[105] The shift is reflected in succession politics. Among the Umayyads, only the sons of noble Arabian mothers could become caliphs (at least until 743).[106] In contrast, of the first five Abbasid caliphs, three were the progeny of non-Arab concubines (al-Manṣūr, al-Hādī and Hārūn al-Rashīd). While the cadet branches of the dynasty were appointed to the important gubernatorial posts in the provinces, they were excluded from association with the succession by marriage (the Abbasid marriages of al-Mahdī and Hārūn al-Rashīd were endogamous within the ruling line). This may in part have been a deliberate policy by the early Abbasid caliphs (or their courtiers) to limit the influence of other branches of their dynasty over the succession to the caliphate, but it had wider implications about notions of legitimate authority. In Muḥammad b. Ḥajar's letter, the 'blessed and pure progeny' and the 'People of the House' evoke sacred status through the Hashimite male line. In this it marks something of a break with pre-Islamic Arabian tribal custom, where maternal ancestry was more significant.

Abbasid marriage patterns also reflect the diminished importance of alliance with Arabian tribal leaders. The Abbasid Revolution had transformed the military foundations of imperial power in the Muslim empire; the loyalty of the Khurasani army commanders to the caliph were now the basis of caliphal power. That the 'letter' described above derives from the Byzantine frontier is itself a reflection of the importance of the new, ethnically mixed provincial armies; just as al-Mahdī and al-Hādī had secured the succession through their connections with Khurasan, Hārūn's claims on the succession were supported by the troops of the western frontier. The appointment of Abbasid family members to the important provinces, and of potential heirs to the caliphate to senior provincial administrative

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and military posts, indicates the great importance of developing these personal connections with the provincial armies.

If the unity of the empire was to be retained, it was vital to give the provincial elites a stake in the benefits of the empire; al-Manṣūr's determination to retain and consolidate centralised power is reflected in his foundation of a single imperial capital at Baghdad, which was a physical and symbolic expression of the central place of the caliph in the empire. It was also a centre that drew in provincial elites seeking caliphal patronage. Far more than the Umayyads, the early Abbasids courted non-Arabian associates and drew indigenous elites – especially those from Iraq, Khurasan and the east – into the imperial power structure. Just as other offices and honours, and their accompanying robes and insignia, were bestowed in ceremonies at the new imperial capital, formal recognition of the status of the caliph's heir – and thus of his supporters in the provinces – also took place there. Support from the frontier armies was vital, but they were tied to the centralised empire by the need to have the status of 'their' candidate for the succession ratified at the centre.

Thus, al-Mahdī's bid for the caliphate began with his appointment to the eastern frontier and was proclaimed in 764 but had to be formally ratified through his formal reception at Madīnat al-Salām, in 768, where he entered the new city in triumph and was acclaimed by his relatives as al-Manṣūr's heir. However, al-Mahdī's recognition had required ʿĪsā b. Mūsā's public renunciation of his claims on the caliphate, which were threatening both because of ʿĪsā's support among the wider Abbasid family and among some of the population of Khurasan. Consultation among a ruling tribe no longer decided the succession; it was necessary to persuade a far larger body of commanders and courtiers to accept the caliphal succession. This brought about the invention of the ritual of *khalʿ* at which approval (*riḍā*) of the Muslims for al-Mahdī was invoked in justifying his claim to the caliphate and ʿĪsā very publicly 'freed' his supporters from their obligations to him and 'sold' his rights to first place in the succession. In the next two generations, the same opposition between 'covenant' and 'approval', 'centre' and 'periphery', was played out again between al-Mahdī's sons and grandsons, but with more destructive results.

NOTES

1. Ṭab., iii, 87–8, 388–9; cf. Yaq., ii, 436, 468; Mas., iv, §2370, §2435 (vi, 156–7, 224–5).
2. Crone, *Slaves*, 177; cf. Daniel, *Political and Social History*, 162–7, and Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 91–2, who both link rebellions in Khurasan to ʿĪsā's deposition.
3. ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā's hostility to ʿĪsā b. Mūsā was said to have been because of this: Ṭab., iii, 455. For millenarian ideas among the Khurasani troops, see Bal., iii, 235f. = Bal.(D), iii, 266f; Ṭab., iii, 129–33; Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 65–6.

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4. Ṭab., ii, 840; Crone, *Slaves*, 176.
5. al-Nahrawālī, *al-Aʿlām*, 441. Cf. Azr., 428–9, 482.
6. Yāqūt, *Irshād*, vi, 399; Sezgin, *Geschichte*, i, 287–8.
7. Bal., iii, 252–6 = Bal.(D), iii, 286–90, which includes an account of al-Manṣūr's desire to give another son, Ṣāliḥ, a place in the succession: Bal., iii, 256 = Bal.(D), iii, 290–1.
8. Ṭab., iii, 331–52.
9. See above, n. 4.
10. Khālid: Ṭab., iii, 345–6. Salm: Bal., iii, 254 = Bal.(D), iii, 289; Ṭab., iii, 350–1.
11. Ṭab., iii, 346.
12. Bal., iii, 252–4 = Bal.(D), iii, 286–8; Ṭab., iii, 338–45.
13. Ṭab., iii, 333–7. On ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī's loyalty to Abū al-ʿAbbās and al-Manṣūr, see Bal., iii, 89 = Bal.(D), iii, 98.
14. Bal., iii, 252–3 = Bal.(D), iii, 287; Ṭab., iii, 332.
15. Ṭab., iii, 352; Nicol, 'Early ʿAbbāsid administration', 48–51.
16. Ṭab., iii, 328–30; Bal., iii, 254–5 = Bal.(D), iii, 288–9 (*dhakarū*); Ṭab., iii, 333–4 (*qīla*); Daniel, *Political and Social History*, 163–4.
17. Bal., iii, 252 = Bal.(D), iii, 286; Ṭab., iii, 347–8; *Agh.*, xviii, 150–1; al-Ṣūlī, *Ashʿār awlād al-khulafāʾ*, 310–11. The rehabilitation failed: Abū Nukhayla was murdered at the behest of ʿĪsā b. Mūsā.
18. Ṭab., iii, 347.
19. Ṭab., iii, 348–9; tr. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxix, 34–6 (H. Kennedy). For parallels, see above, pp. 92, 109.
20. See above, p. 114.
21. See above, Ch. 1, n. 19; also pp. 172–3.
22. See above, pp. 92–3.
23. Cf. Q 61.6. For the idea that the caliphate belonged to the progeny of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, see Bal., iii, 179 = Bal.(D), iii, 203.
24. Ṭab., iii, 351–2.
25. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Khilʿa' (N. A. Stillman); Gordon, 'A world of investiture'; Sourdel, 'Robes of honor'.
26. Bal., iii, 254–5 = Bal.(D), iii, 289. On the *ṭasāsīj*, see El-Ali, 'Foundation', 88; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ṭassūdj' (M. Morony).
27. See above, n. 15.
28. Yaq., ii, 457.
29. Ṭab., iii, 278, 353.
30. Wendell, 'Baghdad'; Beckwith, 'The plan of the city'; van Bladel, 'Bactrian background'.
31. al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, i, 107; Lassner, *Topography*, 141–6. On the cubit used by Hārūn al-Rashīd at Heraqlah in *c.* 806–8 as 510.8mm: Toueir, 'Heraqlah', 301; cf. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Dhirāʾ' (W. Hinz).
32. al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, i, 73, 107. The *iwan* (Iranian arched façade) was 30 cubits × 20 cubits (about 15m high and 10m wide). Cf. Allan, 'New additions', 19.
33. Cf. al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, i, 74–5, for small caliphal *majālis* over the city gates.
34. See above, n. 2, for support for ʿĪsā b. Mūsā in the provinces.
35. Ṭab., iii, 345–6.
36. IAṬ, fo. 128a; Ṣaf., iii, 143–5.
37. Cf. the sermon in the Ḥijāz in Bal., iii, 256–7 = Bal.(D), iii, 291.

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38. See above, pp. 157–9.
39. A common address in pre-Islamic and quranic Arabic. Cf. Q 6.128, 130; Q 55.33; also above, p. 92.
40. See above, p. 176.
41. Crone, 'On the meaning', 104.
42. After Ṣaf., iii, 125, n. 6.
43. IAṬ, fo. 128a; Ṣaf., iii, 126.
44. IAṬ, fo. 128a; Ṣaf., iii, 126–7.
45. On the possible evolution of the tradition, see Görke, 'al-Ḥudaybiya'.
46. See above, p. 194, and Lassner, '[c]Abbasid *Dawla*', 262ff.
47. See above, pp. 126–7, 156, 169.
48. Bates, 'Khurāsānī revolutionaries', 292ff. Cf. Farr, 'Abbasid Fals'.
49. Miles, *Numismatic History*, 28–32; *EAC*, 276–7, 228–9.
50. Miles, *Numismatic History*, 30–8; *EAC*, 190–6, nos 1584–622.
51. *EAC*, 138–9, nos 1022–3, 234–5, nos 2057–8, 44–5, no. 22, 280–1, no. 2563.
52. *EAC*, 106–7, nos 670–6, 114–15, nos 760–3.
53. *EAC*, 302–83. Again, with the exception of Rayy/al-Muḥammadiyya, they began to be produced in 147/764–5 and production ceased almost everywhere in 158/774–5. Lowick mistakenly stated that there is an example of a *fals* proclaiming al-Mahdī as *walī al-[c]ahd*. This in fact refers to Muḥammad al-Amīn: *EAC*, 360–1, no. 616; de Tiesenhausen, *Moneti*, 1292. The title *walī al-[c]ahd* was not used on the coinage until 164/780–1.
54. Although al-Ṭabarī states that he had become governor in 153/770–1, his name appears on the coins at the same time that al-Mahdī's does, from 152/769–70: Nicol, 'Early [c]Abbāsid administration', 94–5, 306, 311. His successor, al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba, continued the series for one year. Thereafter, no dirhams were issued from Armenia and Arrān until the third year of al-Mahdī's caliphate, perhaps because of frequent unrest in Armenia in this period: *EAC*, 106–7, 114–15; Nicol, 'Early [c]Abbāsid administration', 95–6.
55. Ṭab., iii, 354–8; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ustādhsīs' (W. Madelung).
56. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ruṣāfa' (C. E. Bosworth). See further below, n. 90.
57. On the *adventus* in the Roman empire, see MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 17ff.; McCormick, *Eternal Victory*; Dagron, *Emperor*, 61ff. On the reception of the Achaemenid kings by their subjects, see Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, 38.
58. Ṭab., iii, 364.
59. Ṭab., iii, 364.
60. Ṭab., iii, 367.
61. Bal., iii, 256 = Bal.(D), iii, 291.
62. [c]Īsā b. [c]Alī and [c]Īsā b. Mūsā: Bal., iii, 89, 178–9, 181, 184ff. = Bal.(D), iii, 98, 202, 203, 209, 211ff.; Din., 374–5; Ṭab., iii, 87, 89, 92; Mas., iv, §2370 (vi, 156–7); Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 90–1.
63. Ṭab., iii, 388–90.
64. Ṭab., iii, 390, 451–5.
65. Ṭab., iii, 456–7.
66. Bal., iii, 273 = Bal.(D), iii, 309.
67. Ṭab., iii, 453.
68. Ṭab., iii, 457.
69. Mūsā b. al-Mahdī (the future caliph al-Hādī) was either *c.* 11 or *c.* 14 years old in 775: Yaq., ii, 491; Ṭab., iii, 579–80.

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70. Cf. Ṭab., iii, 457–8, where it seems that he replaced Ṣāliḥ b. al-Manṣūr.
71. See above, pp. 118, 163–4.
72. Ṭab., iii, 453.
73. As in the Umayyad period; see above, p. 137.
74. Ṭab, iii, 456.
75. Yaq., ii, 472.
76. Yaq., ii, 472, says Manāra took twelve days. For the date of the *bayᶜa*, see Ṭab., iii, 451, 456.
77. Bal., iii, 257 = Bal.(D), iii, 291.
78. Ṭab., iii, 441–2; *Agh.*, iii, 94–5.
79. Ṭab., iii, 387, 443, 449, 450–1; cf. Ṭab., iii, 523–4; Lassner, '[ᶜ]Abbasid *Dawla*', 266.
80. See above, pp. 118, 163–4.
81. Ṭab., iii, 471–6. Yaq., ii, 476, gives the date of these events as 159/775–6. Mūsā was now either about 13 or about 16 (see above, n. 69).
82. Ṭab., iii, 467–9.
83. Probably al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān b. Isḥāq al-Hāshimī. At Ṭab., iii, 324, 471, 547, 598, he is the sole transmitter for a cluster of traditions for the mid-770s–mid-780s; he also relates an account from his father, Sulaymān.
84. In an earlier *khabar* (Ṭab., iii, 467–9), 'the Banū Hāshim and their partisans among the Khurasanis'.
85. Nicol, 'Early [ᶜ]Abbāsid administration', 50–1.
86. See above, pp. 107–8.
87. Muḥammad b. [ᶜ]Abd Allāh b. [ᶜ]Ulātha was *qāḍī* at al-Mahdī's palace at al-Ruṣāfa, in Baghdad; al-Zanjī is otherwise unknown: Crone, *Slaves*, 171; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxix, 173, n. 574 (H. Kennedy).
88. Other figures: 20 million (Bal., iii, 255 = Bal.(D), iii, 289); one million (Yaq., ii, 476); 10 or 20 million (Ṭab., iii, 468).
89. Ṭab., iii, 476; tr. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxix, 186–7 (H. Kennedy).
90. *EI*[2], s.v. 'al-Ruṣāfa' (C. E. Bosworth). Cf. al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, i, 108–9, who indicates that it was both begun and finished at the outset of al-Mahdī's reign.
91. Al-Mahdī's mother was Umm Mūsā b. Manṣur b. [ᶜ]Abd Allāh b. Dhī Sahm b. Yazīd al-Ḥimyarī: Yaq., ii, 471–2.
92. Bal., iii, 255 = Bal.(D), iii, 289–90; cf. *Agh.*, ix, 41.
93. He introduces it with 'this is a copy' (*wa-hādhihi nuskha*): Ṭab., iii, 474.
94. Ṭab., iii, 474–5.
95. See further below, Ch. 12.
96. Bal.(D), iii, 253ff.; Ṭab., iii, 467–9; Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 98, 104–7. Cf. Crone, *Slaves*, 169, 175, 178.
97. Ṭab., iii, 494–5; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 98, ii, 730.
98. Ṭab., iii, 492; al-[ᶜ]Alī, '*al-Usrat al-[ᶜ]Abbāsiyya*', 254.
99. Ṭab., iii, 492, 497–8, 500; Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 107–8; Kennedy, 'Succession disputes', 32.
100. Kimber, 'Succession'.
101. IAṬ, fos. 128a–b; Ṣaf., iii, 147–8.
102. On Muḥammad b. Ḥajar, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 132, 139–40. For his employer in the north-west *thughūr*, see Ṭab., iii, 125, 280.

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103. Cf. AB, s.v. *abṣār*.
104. See above, p. 4.
105. Cf. Crone, *Political Thought*, 96–8.
106. See above, pp. 120–1, 122.

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CHAPTER

11

THE CALIPHATES OF MŪSĀ AL-HĀDĪ (785–786) AND HĀRŪN AL-RASHĪD (786–809)

When al-Mahdī died suddenly, and unexpectedly, on a hunting expedition on 4 August 785, Hārūn al-Rashīd was with the caliph at Māsabadhān (the foothills of al-Jibāl, some 250 kilometres east of Baghdad). Al-Hādī, the senior successor, was campaigning in Jurjān, east of the Caspian Sea (a further 750 kilometres north-east of the capital). Hārūn al-Rashīd duly had Mūsā recognised as caliph, but Mūsā was to reign for less than fourteen months; he died in September 786. As a result, accounts of the events of his very brief caliphate (and of the succession arrangements under al-Mahdī) were shaped during the caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashīd, who reigned for the next twenty-three years. What may have amounted to a coup, orchestrated by Hārūn's supporters at the imperial court and in the provincial armies, appears to have been partially suppressed in the extant accounts.[1]

According to al-Ṭabarī, the *mawlā*, al-Rabīᶜ b. Yūnus, took the opportunity of proclaiming al-Hādī's accession from Māsabadhān also to proclaim Hārūn al-Rashīd as the *walī al-ᶜahd*. The letters to the provinces requested the pledge of allegiance to al-Hādī as caliph and Hārūn al-Rashīd as *walī al-ᶜahd*. As we have seen, this may have been the first occasion on which Hārūn was formally proclaimed as such; if so, it amounted to an arrogation of the rights of al-Hādī to decide the succession, and thus set the scene for what appears to have amounted to near civil war. Against the claims made in al-Rabīᶜ b. Yūnūs's letters to the provinces, Mūsā al-Hādī and his supporters may have claimed that Hārūn had not been formally recognised at the capital, and that this left the question of the succession open.[2] Certainly, al-Hādī proclaimed Jaᶜfar b. al-Hādī, his young son, as a new *walī al-ᶜahd* in 786.[3] In a few anecdotes, an army was sent to the western provinces to enforce the installation of Jaᶜfar as *walī al-ᶜahd* in the regions most loyal to Hārūn al-Rashīd.[4] (That the commander of this force, Abū Hurayra

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al-Azdī, was executed by Hārūn soon after his own accession may indicate some truth in this report.)

Hārūn al-Rashīd presented a serious threat to the supporters of al-Hādī and Jaʿfar: he had well-established connections with the wealthy and influential Barmakid family of administrators and also appears to have been backed by the matriarch of al-Mahdī's family, al-Khayzūrān, perhaps in part because she knew that her influence would end with the accession of one of her grandsons in place of her other son.[5] Connections with military commanders in the west of the caliphate had been cultivated during his appointment there. Among his three most prominent supporters, one, Khuzayma b. Khāzim al-Tamīmī, had lost out under al-Hādī when he was dismissed from the governorship of Armenia. Other supporters included Harthama b. Aʿyān, a former supporter of ʿĪsā b. Mūsā, and, probably, Rawḥ b. Ḥāṭim, the governor of Ifrīqiya.[6]

In some accounts, Hārūn suffered similar treatment at the hands of al-Hādī as that of ʿĪsā b. Mūsā under al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī. What saved Hārūn from the fate of ʿĪsā b. Mūsā was the coincidence of his powerful support at court and in the provinces with the untimely (and, in some accounts, unnatural) death of al-Hādī. On the morning of al-Hādī's death, Hārūn was quickly proclaimed caliph, and Jaʿfar b. al-Hādī was forced to renounce his claim to the caliphate. He is said to have appeared at the gates of his palace in Baghdad to declare, after the fashion of ʿĪsā b. Mūsā, that those who had pledged allegiance to him had been released from their obligations.[7] That the sources devote so much less space to Jaʿfar's deposition than to ʿĪsā's perhaps reflects the extent of Hārūn al-Rashīd's support, and the limited influence of Jaʿfar outside the capital.

The promulgation of the legitimacy of Hārūn al-Rashīd's accession is said to have been managed by his Barmakid tutor and vizier, Yaḥyā b. Khālid. On hearing of al-Hādī's fatal illness, one anonymous anecdote about the coup has Yaḥya b. Khālid ordering 'the secretaries' (*al-kuttāb*) to assemble: 'Throughout the night, they wrote letters from al-Rashīd to the caliphal officials (*al-ʿummāl*) about al-Hādī's death, and (informing them) that al-Rashīd confirmed them in their posts.' On the death of al-Hādī, 'they sent out (the letters) by postal rider (*al-burud*)'.[8] In some accounts, the Barmakids' Mesopotamian scribe, Yūsuf b. al-Qāsim b. Ṣubayḥ al-Ḥarrānī, is named as the author of the letters.[9] On the morning of al-Hādī's sudden death in September 786, the same Yūsuf b. al-Qāsim is also said to have spoken before the assembled army commanders at Baghdad. Al-Ṭabarī relates a version of the speech on the authority of one of Yūsuf b. al-Qāsim's grandsons.[10] According to the grandson, the speech was reported to him from memory by one of his family's *mawālī*.

Much is familiar from analogous earlier Abbasid public documents: the Abbasids' supporters are 'the assemblies of the people of the house of God's

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prophet' (*maᶜāshir ahl bayt nabīyihi*);[11] God has 'brought to you . . . from His favours which cannot be counted and which will never cease . . . in that He has brought your unity together (*jamaᶜa ulfatakum*) . . .';[12] The description of al-Rashīd's supporters as 'people of obedience' (*ahl al-ṭāᶜa*) is a phrase commonly found in both Umayyad and Abbasid texts, but they are also 'from the helpers of the revolution and supporters of the mission' (*min anṣār al-dawla wa-aᶜwān al-daᶜwa*) – a thoroughly Abbasid formulation, not least in its echo of the Prophetic covenant with the Anṣār of Medina. Yūsuf concluded: 'Give the handclasp of your oaths, and uphold your pledge of allegiance (*wa-aᶜṭū ṣafqa aymānikum wa-qūmū ilā bayᶜatikum*) – may God protect you and defend you, bring about righteousness through you at your hands, and take you as His helpers, just as He takes His righteous devotees!' [13]

This typically early Abbasid rhetoric, which is parallelled in other Abbasid texts associated with accession and succession, would have taken on particular resonances in the context of Hārūn's hurried accession. The quranic language of the revolution was deployed to legitimate Hārūn and his supporters. The 'blessing of God' (*niᶜmat Allāh*) and the material rewards of the 'army stipends' (*al-aᶜṭiyāt*) and 'bonus payments' (*al-jāʾiza*) refer to the Baghadi garrisons' expectations of payment on the accession of a new caliph.[14] Al-Rashīd's supporters among those troops have 'rescued (the members of the house of God's Prophet) from the hands of the oppressors, the imams of tyranny, of the violators of God's covenant (*al-nāqiḍīn ᶜahd Allāh*), of those who shed innocent blood (*al-sāfikīn al-dam al-ḥarām*) and of those who consumed the public revenues of the Muslims (*al-fayʾ*)'.[15] Like the *khuṭba* attributed to Abū al-ᶜAbbās at his accession in 749/50, the violators of God's covenant are both the defeated Umayyads and their quranic prototype, Pharaoh (Q 28.5; Q 8.52–3).[16] Here, however, the 'violators of God's covenant' are most likely also the faction that had supported Jaᶜfar b. al-Hādī against Hārūn.

One specific detail connects the speech to Hārūn in particular. He is described as *rāshidan marḍiyyan* ('rightly guided, well-pleasing'), which are epithets that echo his usual *laqab*, al-Rashīd, and another *laqab*, *al-Khalīfa al-Marḍī*, 'The Caliph Well-Pleasing (to God and/or to the Muslims)', which appears on a few coins issued from the town of al-Hārūniyya, in the Syrian and Armenian *thughūr*, in the last year of al-Hādī's reign (170/ 786–7). In the context of the usurpation of power with the backing of the army, the use of a *laqab* derived from the same root as the revolutionary slogan *riḍā* evoked the idea of election by God's army as a source of legitimacy, as it had been invoked by al-Mahdī's supporters against ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā in the 760s. Both al-Mahdī and his son al-Rashīd had to appeal to popular consent (*riḍā*) against established covenant and contract (*ᶜahd*).[17]

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THE SUCCESSION TO HĀRŪN AL-RASHĪD AND THE 'MECCAN SETTLEMENT'

The disastrous civil war of 811–19, which followed two years after Hārūn al-Rashīd's death in 809, has lent a sense of dramatic irony to the historical narratives of his reign. The conflict began with tension between Hārūn's two nominated heirs (*walī al-ᶜahd*s), al-Amīn and al-Maᵓmūn, over the caliphal succession and rapidly developed into a destructive and bitter civil war. Although few at the time of Hārūn can have anticipated the extent of the disaster of the decade after 809, the tensions that finally split the Abbasid caliphate in the early ninth century were long-standing. Much of the politics of the succession under Hārūn al-Rashīd makes sense in the light of the difficulties of balancing ambitions within the court at the imperial capital of Baghdad and between the army at the capital and those of the frontier provinces.

In 791–2, five years after his accession, Hārūn al-Rashīd publicly proclaimed Muḥammad al-Amīn, the 5-year-old son of his Abbasid wife, Zubayda b. Jaᶜfar b. al-Manṣūr, as his *walī al-ᶜahd* in Baghdad.[18] Even more than with the promotion of al-Hādī in 776, and of his son Jaᶜfar b. al-Hādī in 785, the sources give the impression that powerful factions had brought about the nomination of al-Amīn as Hārūn al-Rashīd's *walī al-ᶜahd*. The coalition included Zubayda herself, and her brothers, the 'Jaᶜfariyya', as well as the Barmakid governor of Khurasan, al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā b. Khālid. They are said to have presented al-Amīn's election to Hārūn as a *fait accompli*.[19] Although one might detect the historiographic consequences of al-Amīn's eventual deposition by his brother, al-Maᵓmūn, in this denial of Hārūn's agency, al-Amīn's age at his *bayᶜa* ceremony does suggest a puppet status. At only 5 years old, al-Amīn was the youngest ever *walī al-ᶜahd*, and perhaps the second Abbasid *walī al-ᶜahd* to be publicly proclaimed as heir while a minor.[20]

Subsequent events suggest that Hārūn soon began to assert his control outside Iraq and that, as he broke free of the influence of his Barmakid advisers, he sought to broker agreements between the elites of the various regions of the empire via a series of public agreements about the succession. It was to be a disastrous failure, but this perhaps reflects structural weakness in the empire more than any special failing on the part of the caliph.

In 796–7 Hārūn moved the capital to al-Raqqa/al-Rāfiqa (ancient Callinicum), on the banks of the Euphrates, nearly 600 kilometres north-west of Baghdad. This move to North Mesopotamia marked a significant departure: Hārūn was to retain al-Raqqa/al-Rāfiqa as the imperial capital until the last months of his reign in 809. (The Barmakid, al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā, and his 10-year-old charge, al-Amīn, were left with responsibility for 'the two Iraqs' [that is, Baghdad and lowland Iraq and

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western Persia[21].) The move appears to have been an effort by Hārūn to develop alternative military support beyond that of the Abnāʾ at the old Iraqi capital, and to secure the loyalty of the Syrian armies.[22] Al-Rāfiqa ('The Companion') was a fortified palace-city, adjacent to the old Roman and Umayyad city of al-Raqqa, which had been begun by al-Manṣūr and developed under al-Mahdī.[23] Hārūn's city was constructed on a vast scale, as the ruins of his palaces testify: the great mosque of al-Rāfiqa, enlarged at some point in Hārūn's reign, is the same size as al-Manṣūr's mosque at Madīnat al-Salām, with room for over 14,000 men (108m × 93m, or 10,044m^2).

From al-Raqqa/al-Rāfiqa, Hārūn led the frontier armies in raids against Byzantium in the summer of 796 and then the *ḥajj* in the spring of 797.[24] Then, in 799 or 800 (182 or 183 H), a son by a concubine from Bādhghīs, in southern Khurasan, Muḥammad al-Maʾmūn, was proclaimed as a second *walī al-ʿahd* before the 'army . . . of al-Raqqa' (*jund . . . al-Raqqa*).[25] Al-Maʾmūn, who was between 11 and 14 years old, was appointed to Khurasan and all the eastern provinces of the caliphate, with the Barmakid Jaʿfar b. Yaḥyā b. Khālid as his tutor. After the ceremonies at the new capital, al-Maʾmūn travelled to the former capital of Madīnat al-Salām with an entourage that included Hārūn's uncle Jaʿfar b. Abī Jaʿfar b. al-Manṣūr and his third cousin ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ, as well as the Khurasani commander ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Māhān.[26] On his arrival at Madīnat al-Salām, al-Maʾmūn received a second pledge of allegiance.[27] Even with the capital formally transferred to Syria, the elite of Baghdad – including the first heir, al-Amīn – were crucial to securing the position of a second heir.

Then, at the end of 802, Hārūn al-Rashīd used the gathering of the imperial elite for the annual *ḥajj* at Mecca as an opportunity to carry out a unique ceremony that publicly bound his two sons into an agreement to respect one another's rights. In late 802 the caliph departed from al-Raqqa/al-Rāfiqa to embark on the *ḥajj*, accompanied by both his nominated successors. *En route*, Hārūn and his sons distributed money to the people of the two shrine cities.[28] On 'the day before *yawm al-tarwiya*', with which the pilgrimage rites begin (that is, Dhū al-Ḥijja 186/6 December 802), Hārūn presided over a new ceremony at the Kaʿba.[29] (Other sources suggest that it took place *after* the *ḥajj* rituals.[30]) Before an audience of 'the Banū Hāshim, the army commanders and the legal scholars', and others, including the Qurashī 'guardians' (*ḥajaba*, sing. *ḥājib*) of the Kaʿba, al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn swore to respect one another's rights to the succession.[31] Two 'conditional agreements' (*sharṭān*, sing. *sharṭ*), given by each of the heirs to Hārūn al-Rashīd, were drawn up. In some accounts they were handwritten by the two *walī al-ʿahd*s. The documents were to be kept at the Kaʿba, and copies of them were also to be kept by the parties to the agreement.

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The public promulgation of the succession arrangements in the provinces, and the keeping of numerous dispositive records throughout the caliphate, was perhaps intended to prevent the kind of confusion that Hārūn al-Rashīd's supporters had exploited in 785–6. A unique account, preserved by al-Ṭabarī, records the letter to the provinces about the agreement, dated Muḥarram 187/December 802–January 803.[32] It was written by the Barmakids' scribe, Ismāʿīl b. Ṣubayḥ al-Ḥarrānī. It was to be read aloud in the provinces, and copied into the provincial *dīwān*s. After the 'mission topos', it states that the will of the Muslims regarding the pledges of allegiance to the two heirs is an expression of God's will and that al-Rashīd has had the heirs swear oaths in the Kaʿba to secure their mutual harmony. He describes the assent of al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn to the conditions, their writing of witnessed oaths in the Kaʿba at the pilgrimage and the entrusting of these documents to the guardians of the Kaʿba. Hārūn has had his judges promulgate the agreement among those present for the pilgrimage and had the agreements (*sharṭān*) read out in full in the Masjid al-Ḥarām. The judges then returned to the provinces and the people there confirmed the agreements and offered up prayers for them.

Three early sources record versions of the documents of the agreement itself: al-Yaʿqūbī's *History*, al-Ṭabarī's *History of the Prophets and Kings* and al-Azraqī's *Book of Accounts of Mecca*.[33] Al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Azraqī preserve very similar versions of the document. Al-Yaʿqūbī's copies have no *isnād*, which is typical of his *History*.[34] In al-Azraqī's text, the documents follow an account of the events at the *ḥajj*. This account is said to have been written by al-Ḥasan b. Sahl, the brother of al-Maʾmūn's vizier, in 815–16 (200 H). If al-Azraqī's attribution of this report is to be believed, then his version of the texts could reflect a near-contemporary version of the documents, albeit one from the heart of the court of al-Maʾmūn, composed shortly after the killing of al-Amīn in 813.[35] The very close parallels between al-Azraqī's text and al-Yaʿqūbī's suggest that they share a common source.

Each of the two documents is a contract of appointment to the succession, made between one of the two heirs and Hārūn al-Rashīd. They both begin with the formula 'This is a document for (*hādhā kitāb li-*) the Servant of God, Hārūn, the Commander of the Faithful. Muḥammad (al-Amīn)/ʿAbd Allāh (al-Maʾmūn) wrote it for him (*katabahu lahu*)'. The purpose of al-Amīn's document is summarised in its opening clause:

> The Commander of the Faithful has appointed me to the covenant after him, and imposed the pledge of allegiance to me upon the necks of all Muslims, and appointed my brother, ʿAbd Allāh, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, to the covenant, the caliphate and all of the affairs of the Muslims after me,

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> pleased with me, and in obedient acceptance which is not compelled (*riḍan minnī wa-taslīman ṭāʾiᶜan ghayr mukrah*). He has appointed him to Khurasan, with its frontiers and its districts, its armies, tax, *ṭirāz* factories, post, treasuries, alms-tax, tithe, tithings and all of its offices in his (Hārūn's) life and after his death . . .[36]

In the remaining clauses, al-Amīn acknowledges his obligation to continue to recognise al-Maʾmūn's rights as heir and as governor of a near-independent Khurasan and to support him against rebels and enemies. Violation of these conditions will lead to al-Amīn's ceasing to be a Muslim and being deposed from the caliphate.

Al-Maʾmūn's document is shorter. It recapitulates the terms of al-Amīn's document and then comes to the terms that obliged al-Maʾmūn:

> I have given an undertaking to (*sharaṭtu li-*) the Servant of God, Hārūn, the Commander of the Faithful and I have acknowledged obligations which are binding upon me (*jaᶜaltu lahu ᶜalā nafsī*): that I will listen to Muḥammad (the Son) of the Commander of the Faithful and obey him – (that) I will not rebel against him, will give sincere advice to him and will not act treacherously and will fulfil his pledge of allegiance and his apppointment, nor will I betray (it), or violate (it), and I will carry out his written (commands) and (verbal) orders, will do my best in assisting and defending him and will strive against his enemies – on condition that he fulfils for me what he has given to me as conditions.[37]

Further clauses elaborate on al-Amīn's rights to request assistance from al-Maʾmūn, and al-Amīn's right to appoint a successor after al-Maʾmūn. Again, should al-Maʾmūn violate the agreement, then he is to be considered an infidel.

Al-Ṭabarī is not clear about his sources for his versions of the two documents. They may be part of a long account on the authority of a certain al-Ḥasan b. Quraysh, who is unknown apart from his reports in al-Ṭabarī's *History* on the agreements about the succession to Hārūn. Alternatively, the documents may be an interpolation into al-Ḥasan's account of 802, possibly on the authority of ᶜAbd Allāh b. Mūḥammad, 'Ibn al-Bawwāb', and a certain Ibrāhīm b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ḥajabī: ᶜAbd Allāh was chamberlain (*ḥājib*) to al-Rashīd and al-Amīn;[38] Ibrāhīm is most likely a guardian (*ḥājib*) of the Kaᶜba, who appears in the witness list appended to some versions of the documents.

Al-Ṭabarī's version of the second document, written by or on behalf of al-Maʾmūn, is very close indeed to the version found in al-Yaᶜqūbī and al-Azraqī. His version of the first document is very different. It begins as an agreement given to Hārūn al-Rashīd by al-Amīn to respect the rights of his brother al-Maʾmūn as his successor and governor of Khurasan. In this it is the same as the version

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reproduced in the earlier sources. However, after these clauses, the document diverges substantially from the text as recorded by al-Azraqī and al-Yaʿqūbī. It moves from the first person (that is, the voice of al-Amīn himself), to the third person and imposes far more extensive and stringent conditions protecting al-Maʾmūn's rights to autonomy in Khurasan under al-Amīn. If al-Amīn should violate al-Maʾmūn's rights as heir or governor, or dismiss any of his military commanders, then the caliphate is to pass directly to al-Maʾmūn from Hārūn al-Rashīd. Furthermore, Qarmāsīn (that is, Kirmānshāh, in Jibāl) is mentioned as the location of the agreement, and a third successor, al-Qāsim, is to succeed al-Maʾmūn; al-Amīn may not interfere with his rights. However, when he becomes caliph, al-Maʾmūn may do so, either affirming al-Qāsim's status or replacing him with a new *walī al-ʿahd*. Instead of being a personal agreement between al-Amīn and Hārūn, the agreement is imposed upon 'the assembly of Muslims' (*maʿshar al-muslimīn*). Should they fail to uphold the agreement then they will be outside the protection of God's covenant and those of the Prophet, the Believers and the Muslims.

Two analyses, by Richard Kimber and Tayeb El-Hibri, have reached very different, though not entirely incompatible, conclusions about the divergences from the version recorded by al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Azraqī in al-Ṭabarī's longer text.[39] Kimber argues that the variants reflect changes in the succession policy of Hārūn al-Rashīd, and that the additional material originated in his attempt in 805 to establish al-Maʾmūn in a position in which he, and his provinces in the east, including Khurasan, would have great autonomy within a caliphate governed by al-Amīn. Kimber called this change 'decentralisation'. In al-Ṭabarī's text, material from the 'Meccan Settlement' of 802 was combined with subsequent material from the 'decentralising' agreement at Qarmasīn/Kirmānshāh, in 805, where al-Qāsim al-Muʾtamin was introduced also into the pact, as a third *walī al-ʿahd*, and al-Maʾmūn was granted great independence from al-Amīn in governing the east of the caliphate.[40] In contrast, El-Hibri thought that the increased autonomy granted to al-Maʾmūn (Kimber's 'decentralisation') was in fact a *post facto* fiction of what might be called 'Maʾmūnid historiography'. He argued that in 802 Hārūn al-Rashīd had sought only to reaffirm the succession arrangements for one son to succeed the other; al-Maʾmūn would be a junior partner to al-Amīn while al-Amīn remained alive. In 805 al-Muʾtamin was indeed introduced into the succession, but the clauses in al-Ṭabarī's version that granted al-Maʾmūn very great independence, and limited al-Amīn's freedom of action as caliph, were written in retrospectively as propaganda to justify al-Maʾmūn's fratricidal and regicidal killing of al-Amīn in 813. El-Hibri doubted that even the terms of al-Yaʿqūbī's and al-Azraqī's versions of the documents reflected any original composed at Mecca.

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That the surviving examples of the documents appear to derive from al-Maʾmūn's post-civil-war court is certainly grounds for suspicion. Some of the clauses of both versions of the agreements do anticipate the *casi belli* of 809–11, but this could just as well reflect obvious potential for conflict as a *post facto* justification of it. Furthermore, some stipulations that secured the position of the vulnerable second *walī al-ʿahd* would have made sense, and the inclusion of a third heir, associated with provinces of the western frontier in 805, does suggest efforts to secure the loyalty of the frontier armies and balance the power of the Baghdadi elite. As we have seen, the history of the Abbasid caliphate does suggest a continuing tension between the imperial capital and the provinces, in which Khurasan is both a particular source of rebellion and important to the success of a candidate for the succession. Any agreement about the succession was also in some respects an agreement about the division of the resources of the caliphate among its armies. Hārūn al-Rashīd's 'succession policy' certainly evolved over his twenty-three-year caliphate. The agreements at Mecca and Qarmāsīn followed seven and ten years after Hārūn had granted the Aghlabid dynasty greater autonomy in governing Ifrīqiya; some greater independence for Khurasan may well have been demanded in return for support for al-Amīn. It seems very unlikely that any of the texts is a complete forgery bearing no relation to the original agreements of 802 and 805.

THE WITNESS CLAUSE OF THE AGREEMENT OF 802

A full witness list is found in the first of the two texts as they are recorded by al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Azraqī. Such a list is highly unusual in a later copy of an eighth-century caliphal document. It is abbreviated in al-Yaʿqūbī's text to thirty-two names as opposed to al-Azraqī's thirty-nine; the names that do appear are almost identical in both versions, and are in almost the same order. None of the names is an obvious anachronism, and it seems unlikely that such material could have been invented *ex nihilo,* given that the agreement was in living memory in al-Maʾmūn's reign and the documents had circulated widely. The presence of the Barmakids (who ceased to have much importance after 803) and the absence of al-Amīn's senior commander, ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Māhān (who was not present at Mecca in 802), also suggest that the list may be accurate. If this is so, it reveals which members of Hārūn al-Rashīd's court were thought to be needed as witnesses to an agreement intended to prevent conflict within the imperial elite. From al-Amīn's faction, there are al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā, al-Faḍl b. al-Rabīʿ and members of the Abbasid Jaʿfariyya; from al-Maʾmūn's supporters, Jaʿfar b. Yaḥyā and Harthama b. Aʿyān. The list also illustrates the strict hierarchies of the

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early Abbasid court, in which proximity to the caliph was determined by seniority of position in the imperial elite.

The first fourteen names on the list are all senior members of the Abbasid family – the 'people of the house', or *ahl al-bayt*; that is, they are all agnatic descendants of ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-ᶜAbbās.

Sulaymān, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, al-Manṣūr;
ᶜĪsā b. Jaᶜfar (b. al-Manṣūr);
Jaᶜfar b. Jaᶜfar (b. al-Manṣūr);
ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-Mahdī;
Jaᶜfar b. Mūsā (al-Hādī), the Commander of the Faithful;
Isḥāq b. ᶜĪsā b. ᶜAlī;
ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā (al-Hādī), the Son of the Commander of the Faithful;
Isḥāq b. Mūsā (al-Hādī), the Son of the Commander of the Faithful;
Aḥmad b. Ismāᶜīl b. ᶜAlī;
Sulaymān (Salīm in al-Azraqī) b. Jaᶜfar b. Sulaymān;
ᶜĪsā b. Ṣāliḥ b. ᶜAlī;[41]
Dāwūd b. ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā;
Yaḥyā b. ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā;
Dāwūd b. Sulaymān b. Jaᶜfar.

As one might expect from accounts of early Abbasid court practice, they are listed in an order of seniority based upon age and agnatic descent from a former Abbasid caliph.[42] A son of al-Manṣūr is followed by two of al-Manṣūr's grandsons, both of whom are from the Jaᶜfariyya, the maternal uncles of al-Amīn who had pushed for al-Amīn's nomination as *walī al-ᶜahd* in the early 790s. These are followed by a son of al-Mahdī, and Jaᶜfar b. Mūsā, the deposed son of Hārūn al-Rashīd's brother Mūsā al-Hādī. After him comes Isḥāq b. ᶜĪsā b. ᶜAlī, the son-in-law of al-Mahdī and son of the Manṣūrid loyalist 'uncle' ᶜĪsā b. ᶜAlī, and then two more of Mūsā al-Hādī's sons. Among the rest, from the cadet branches of the dynasty, there is one Sulaymān b. Jaᶜfar b. Sulaymān, who served as governor of Mecca twice during Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign.[43] In al-Azraqī's introduction to the documents (on the authority of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl), Sulaymān b. Abī Jaᶜfar, ᶜĪsā b. Jaᶜfar and Jaᶜfar b. Mūsā (first, second and fifth in the list) are singled out as having been vexed (*mutaḍajjir*) about the agreement.[44]

Next thirteen members of Hārūn al-Rashīd's administration and entourage are listed (eleven in al-Yaᶜqūbī – the last two names are missing).

Khuzayma b. Khāzim (al-Tamīmī);
Harthama b. Aᶜyān;

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Yaḥyā b. Khālid (b. Barmak);
al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā (b. Barmak);
Jaᶜfar b. Yaḥyā (b. Barmak);
al-Faḍl b. al-Rabīᶜ (b. Yūnus), *mawlā* of the Commander of the Faithful;
al-ᶜAbbās b. al-Faḍl b. al-Rabīᶜ (b. Yūnus), *mawlā* of the Commander of the Faithful;
ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-Rabīᶜ (b. Yūnus), *mawlā* of the Commander of the Faithful;
al-Qāsim b. al-Rabīᶜ (b. Yūnus), *mawlā* of the Commander of the Faithful;
Daqāqa b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz (b. ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd Allāh) al-ᶜAbbāsī;
Sulaymān b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Aṣamm;
al-Rabīᶜ b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ḥārithī;
ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī 'l-Samrāᵓ al-Ghassānī.

The list is headed by the two long-standing army loyalists of Hārūn, the Arab revolutionary Khuzayma b. Khāzim al-Tamīmī and Harthama b. Aᶜyan, the Khurasani *mawlā* of the Banū Ḍabba, who both held various senior posts for him before and during his caliphate, including the deputy-captaincies of his *shurṭa* and *ḥaras* (corps of elite bodyguards), under the nominal authority of the Barmakids.[45] They are followed by Yaḥyā b. Khālid, the great Barmakid vizier, and his two sons, al-Faḍl and Jaᶜfar, the tutors of al-Amīn and al-Maᵓmūn, respectively. All were shortly to fall from power in the purges of January 803 that followed the drawing-up of the agreement.[46] Then there are four *mawālī* of the Abbasids, all descendants of al-Rabīᶜ b. Yūnus, the *mawlā* of Abū al-ᶜAbbās, and four courtiers, one of whom is a minor member of the Abbasid dynasty. (A notable absence from this imperial elite is ᶜAlī b. ᶜĪsā b. Māhān, whom one might expect to appear after Harthama and Khuzayma. This is to be explained by his campaigning in northern Khurasan in 802.[47]) Again, rank and then age determine the sequence.

The list ends with the local Meccan elite and some less important members of the caliphal entourage.

Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān (al-Makhzūmī), the *qāḍī* of Mecca;
ᶜAbd al-Karīm b. Shuᶜayb al-Ḥajabī;
Ibrāhīm b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ḥajabī;
ᶜAbd Allāh b. Shuᶜayb al-Ḥajabī;
Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜUthmān al-Ḥajabī;
Ibrāhīm b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Nubayh al-Ḥajabī;
ᶜAbd al-Wāḥid b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ḥajabī;
Ismāᶜīl b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Nubayh al-Ḥajabī;
Abān, *mawlā* of the Commander of the Faithful;

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Muḥammad b. Manṣūr (b. Ziyād);[48]
Ismāᶜīl b. Ṣubayḥ (al-Kātib al-Harrānī);
al-Ḥārith, *mawlā* of the Commander of the Faithful;
Khālid, *mawlā* of the Commander of the Faithful.

The Meccan *qāḍī*, Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān, is mentioned only by al-Azraqī. He was the deputy of the governor of Mecca, ᶜAlī b. Mūsā b. ᶜĪsā. His name is followed by seven guardians of the Kaᶜba (only the first two in al-Yaᶜqūbī, where some names also appear to have been conflated); one of these, Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh, is said to have been the person sent to Mecca by al-Amīn's vizier, al-Faḍl b. al-Rabīᶜ, in 809–10 to collect and destroy the 'Meccan Settlement' documents that were in the Kaᶜba.[49] The list ends with five more of Hārūn's entourage, among them Ismāᶜīl b. Ṣubayḥ al-Ḥarrānī, the Barmakids' Mesopotamian scribe, who was responsible for writing the letter of Hārūn al-Rashīd that promulgated the agreement in the provinces, and most likely for the *sharṭ* documents themselves.

As the survival of the witness list suggests, even if some of the details of the terms of the agreements have been altered, the structure of the documents and the language of their formulas would probably have remained largely unchanged. Any alterations or forgeries would otherwise have been unconvincing. In using handwritten dispositive documents to record a binding agreement about the succession, Hārūn al-Rashīd was following precedents established by his father and grandfather, al-Mahdī and al-Manṣūr.

NOTES

1. See Kennedy, 'Succession disputes'; Bonner, 'Hārūnābād'; Kimber, 'Succession'. Further evidence for Hārūn's succession having taken place without formal nomination during a predecessor's lifetime may be al-Yaᶜqūbī's unusual use of the verb *waliya* to describe his accession: Yaq., ii, 491. On this, see further below, p. 267.
2. Kimber, 'Succession', 431–2, 441–2.
3. Ṭab., iii, 572–3, 602.
4. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxi, 45, n. 182 (C. E. Bosworth).
5. Ṭab., iii, 569–71, 578–80; Abbott, *Two Queens*, 107ff.; Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 106–13.
6. Kennedy, 'Succession disputes', 33; Crone, *Slaves*, 177, 180; Bonner, '*Al-Khalīfa al-Marḍī*', 87, n. 60.
7. Ṭab., iii, 602–3.
8. Ṭab., iii, 578.
9. Ṭab., iii, 600; Jah., 175.
10. Ṭab., iii, 599–601.
11. See above, pp. 198, 209.

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12. Following Ṭab.(C), viii, 231; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxx, 93 and n. 356 (C. E. Bosworth).
13. Adapted from al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxx, 94 (C. E. Bosworth).
14. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Māl al-bayᶜa' (H. Kennedy).
15. Adapted from al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxx, 94 (C. E. Bosworth).
16. Bal., iii, 141–3 = Bal.(D), iii, 157–60; Ṭab., iii, 29–33; Mas., iv, §2316, §2317 (vi, 97–9).
17. Bonner, '*Al-Khalīfa al-Marḍī*'; Bonner, 'Hārūnābād'; Kimber, 'Succession', 444ff.
18. Yaq., ii, 493 (where the gifts distributed on this occasion are detailed); Ṭab., iii, 610; Ṭab., iii, 652; cf. Gabrieli, 'Successione', 344; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxi, 180, n. 663 (C. E. Bosworth). For a donative half-dirham that is probably linked to this occasion, see Shamma, *Aḥdāth*, 47, 77, 125, 619, no. 610, pl. 73.
19. Ṭab., iii, 611.
20. Jaᶜfar b. al-Hādī must have been much less than 14 years old, given that al-Hādī was 26 when he died in 786; see Yaq., ii, 491.
21. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxx, 164 (C. E. Bosworth).
22. Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, xvi; Kimber, 'Meccan settlement'; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxx, xvi (C. E. Bosworth).
23. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Raḳḳa' (M. Meinecke).
24. Ṭab., iii, 645–7.
25. Some coins call him *walī walī al-ᶜahd* to denote his status as al-Amīn's successor: e.g. *EAC*, 102–3, 190–1, 218–19, *et al*.
26. On ᶜAbd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ, see Sourdel, *Vizirat*, 155, 168; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxx, xvi, 7, n. 20, 238, n. 827; Cobb, *White Banners*, 27–31.
27. Ṭab., iii, 647, 652. Cf. Yaq., ii, 500–1.
28. Ṭab., iii, 651–2, 762–3.
29. Azr., 160; Kimber, 'Meccan settlement', 57.
30. e.g. Ṭab., iii, 654.
31. Ṭab., iii, 654.
32. Ṭab., iii, 663–6, where the letter is dated Muḥarram 186/ January–February 802. This must be a copyist's error, brought about by al-Ṭabarī's placing the text *sub anno* 186: Gabrieli, 'Successione', 346–7 and 347, n.1.
33. Yaq., ii, 502–9; Azr., i, 161–8; Ṭab., iii, 654–66. They also occur in later sources, such as Ibn al-Jawzī (see the notes to Ṭab.) and Qal., xiv, 85–9.
34. He does give a list of his sources at the beginning of the second book of his *History*: Yaq., ii, 3–4.
35. The material with which al-Azraqī introduces the texts (on the authority of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl) initially closely resembles the (anonymous) material in al-Ṭabarī that precedes a different *khabar*, on different authorities, which includes his version of the documents: Ṭab., iii, 651–2; Kimber, 'Meccan settlement', 68.
36. Yaq., ii, 502; cf. Azr., i, 161–2.
37. Yaq., ii, 508; cf. Azr., i, 166–7.
38. Ṭab., *Indices*; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxx, 184, 352 (C. E. Bosworth). But see below, p. 227 and n. 49.
39. Kimber, 'Meccan settlement'; El-Hibri, 'Harun al-Rashid'. Cf. Gabrieli, 'Successione'.
40. Cf. Din., 386; Ṭab, iii, 666–7, 688–95, 701, 703–4, 762.
41. His father, Ṣāliḥ b. ᶜAlī, is said to have died in the same year (186/802): Khal., 457.

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42. Cf. the *bayᶜa*s to al-Mahdī in 764 and al-Hādī in 776; Ṭab., iii, 332, 473, and above, pp. 196–8, 205–7.
43. Khal., 461; Ṭab., iii, 739–40.
44. Azr., 161.
45. Khal., 465; Crone, *Slaves*, 177, 180; see also above, p. 217.
46. See below, Ch. 12, n. 91.
47. Crone, *Slaves*, 178; Ṭab., iii, 651.
48. The son of Manṣūr b. Ziyād, the confidante and associate of the Barmakids: Ṭab., iii, 613, 688; Jah., 190, 193, 224, 241–2, 266–8; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 142, n. 2, 148, n. 1.
49. Ṭab., iii, 779–80; Azr., i, 168. Cf. Jah., 292: ‘ᶜAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad, one of the *ḥājib*s’ (see above, p. 222).

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CHAPTER

12

'DISPOSITIVE DOCUMENTS' FOR THE EARLY ABBASID SUCCESSION

At this point, it is worth pausing to assess how the understanding of the 'covenant' between Humanity, God and the caliph had been transformed by the events of the mid-eighth century. Among the best sources of evidence for this are the copies of the 'dispositive documents' (*sharṭ*, pl. *shurūṭ*, *sharāʾiṭ*) concerning the succession that emanated from the early Abbasid caliphal court. These were written records of contractual agreements about the succession. The anonymous commander's account of the ceremony at which ʿĪsā b. Mūsā was deposed in 764 describes how:

> 'By God, if by chance ʿĪsā b. Mūsā forgot something in the sequence of his public declaration, then (al-Mahdī's scribe), Abū ʿUbayd Allāh would stop him until he had completed every detail, in order to bind him into the agreement (*li'l-istīthāq minhu*). Then he sealed the document (*al-kitāb*) and the witnesses witnessed it; I, and all the people, were present until ʿĪsā put his own handwriting and seal on it (*waḍaʿa ʿalayhi ʿĪsā khaṭṭahu wa-khātamahu*). Then they went into the palace through the door of the caliphal enclosure (*maqṣūra*).'[1]

As we have seen, copies of similar documents said to have been used in 776, 802 and 805 are extant in the later tradition (where the documents of 802 and 805 have been conflated). In this chapter, the structure and formulas of the agreements of 802 and 805 are compared with the *sharṭ* for the succession to al-Mahdī, drawn up in 776, as well as with other similar conditional agreements, such as *amān*s, or 'safe-conducts'.

As we saw in Part II, the Umayyads had promulgated their decisions about the succession (and other matters) in writing, but written records of conditional

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agreements between individual members of the ruling elite have no immediate parallel in the history of the Umayyad succession.[2] Very early Islamic political contracts, such as the 'arbitration agreement' made between ᶜAlī and Muᶜāwiya in 657 and the 'Constitution of Medina' of *c*. 622, are evidence of a north Arabian tradition of written political covenant-making, albeit in very different political circumstances, as are even earlier accounts of Muḥammad's written agreements and sixth-century *ḥilf* documents.[3] However, although parallels between the earliest Arabic–Islamic religio-political contracts and the Abbasid texts are evidence of important continuities in the Arabic–Islamic tradition, the dispositive record of an agreement concerning the caliphal succession is a new genre of documentary text that testifies to the transformation of that tradition in the first century of the Muslim empire. In many respects, the closest analogues for the Abbasid agreements about the succession are not the Arabian agreements of the early to mid-seventh-century, but two groups of contemporaneous, mid-eighth-century texts: guarantees of safe-conduct and commercial contract documents.

First, there are copies of the safe-conducts (*amān*s), said to have been drawn up for various individuals during the revolution of 747–50 and its aftermath, which are very similar indeed to the 'dispositive documents' for the succession in their style, lexicon and structure. This suggests a mid-eighth-century pattern for such public agreements, prevalent among the Arab–Muslim elite of the late Marwanid and early Abbasid period. All the agreements have a six-part structure:

i. Introduction
ii. Terms
iii. Covenants
iv. Penalty clause
v. Witnesses
vi. Conclusion

All the Abbasid *shurūṭ* texts relating to the *bayᶜa* have this structure (though 'v' and 'vi' are often conflated). There is some variation in the sequence in the *amān*s, but the elements are the same.[4] The six components are familiar elements from ancient Near Eastern treaties, but, in the context of the evolution of Arabic–Islamic practice, it is notable that the Abbasid texts are much fuller than surviving pre-Islamic, early Islamic and Umayyad contractual documents, which tend to be much shorter, and do not include all six elements.[5] Some of the same basic lexicon of stipulation and obligation is also found in the mid-eighth-century papyri *amān*s, which are much more humble documents written as permits to

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travel for Egyptian labourers.[6] Again, although they share some structural features with them, the succession documents are much fuller and more elaborate than the few lines of the agreements on these papyri.

Second, there are commercial contract documents, also found on papyri, which share a number of features with the succession agreements. Indeed, there is considerable evidence for a relationship between evolving ideas about commercial contract and the evolution of ideas about religio-politial contract revealed by these conditional agreements about the succession. The early Iraqi legal tradition about written commercial contract is accessible via the *Kitāb al-Shurūṭ al-kabīr* ('Large Book of Written Formulas'), composed by the Ḥanafī jurist Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 933). This early work on commerical contract documents includes traditions on the subject attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767) and to traditionists asociated with the Abbasid court, such as Abū Yūsuf (d. 798), al-Shaybānī (d. 805) and ᶜĪsā b. Abān b. Ṣadaqa (d. 835).[7]

In the commentary that follows, the agreements of 776 and 802/5 are compared, with a view to the identification of formal and structural parallels.[8] Parallels with the *amān*s, the commercial papyri and the *shurūṭ* texts are also noted. This analysis is keyed into the six-part structure of the documents. It is followed by some conclusions about the emergence of this new genre of written public political agreement about the succession.

COMMENTARY: THE 'DISPOSITIVE DOCUMENTS' OF 776 AND 802/5

i. Introduction

The opening phrases of the two documents of 802/5 are identical in all three sources (excepting some differences so small as to be attributed to copyists' errors in manuscript transmission).

> In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
> This is a document for (*hādhā kitāb li-*) the Servant of God, Hārūn al-Rashīd, the Commander of the Faithful. [Muḥammad/ᶜAbd Allāh] b. Hārūn, the Commander of the Faithful, wrote (it) [for him],[9] in soundness of [his body][10] [and his mind][11] and lawfully [within][12] his power . . .

In the *sharṭ* of 776, the formula is expanded because ᶜĪsā's agreement affects his status with respect to all Muslims, who are mentioned, in order of rank, from the caliph down:

> In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

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> This is a document for (*hādhā kitāb li-*) the Servant of God, al-Mahdī Muḥammad, the Commander of the Faithful, for the possessor of the covenant of the Muslims, Mūsā b. al-Mahdī, for the people of his house (*ahl baytihi*), all of his commanders and his troops from the people of Khurasan and (for) all of the Muslims, in the world's east and west, wherever any one of them might be.

In all three texts, the *basmala* is followed by the phrase *hādhā kitāb li-* ('this is a document for'). This is a technical phrase that appears in early Arabic letters in the literary sources and on extant papyri that functioned as 'dispositive documents', often between 'high-level official correspondents'.[13] Precedents in the language of the 'Constitution of Medina' and other early public documents might indicate a north Arabian provenance for this feature of written contracts (it was certainly remembered as such).[14] The quranic reference to the 'world's east and west' in the *sharṭ* of 776 recalls earlier Abbasid *amān* texts.[15]

Whereas the agreements of 802/5 mention who wrote the document in the third person (*kataba* – '[he] wrote it'), the *sharṭ* of 776 then moves abruptly into the first person (*katabtuhu* – 'I have written it'), before setting out its subject – the transfer of the 'covenant' to Mūsā b. al-Mahdī – in a kind of preamble:

> I have written it for al-Mahdī Muḥammad, the Commander of the Faithful, and for the *walī* of the *ʿahd* of the Muslims, Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, concerning what was made over to him from the covenant (*ʿahd*), since it had been mine (*idh kāna ilayya*), until the Muslims were united in one opinion (*ijtamaʿat kalima al-Muslimīn*), their condition was one of harmony (*ittasaqa amruhum*) and they agreed in their inclinations (*iʾtalafat ahwāʾuhum*) upon approval (*al-riḍā*) for the succession (*wilāya*) of Mūsā, the Son of al-Mahdī Muḥammad the Commander of the Faithful. I have acknowledged that a handwritten (testimony) concerning that (is an obligation) upon me, and that the handwritten (testimony) about it is mine (*ʿaraftu al-khaṭṭ fī-dhālik ʿalayya wa'l-khaṭṭ fihi lī*).

The 'approval' (*al-riḍā*) of the Muslims echoes the language of the Abbasid revolution, which remained an important aspect of Abbasid legitimacy. Here it is deployed against ʿĪsā: the Muslims' 'approval' is for Mūsā b. al-Mahdī for the succession; the rhetoric of harmony and agreement among Muslims is also typical of the post-revolutionary period.[16]

The assertion that 'the handwritten testimony (*al-khaṭṭ*) about it is mine' might indicate that the whole text was written by ʿĪsā himself; more likely, it shows that he has added a handwritten acknowledgement to the text. This reflects a changing attitude to written testimony in Islamic culture. Neither such seventh- and early

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eighth-century Arabic documents as are extant nor versions of such documents preserved in the literary tradition mention handwriting. However, a 'handwritten acknowledgement' (*tawqīᶜ*) is said to have been added to one of the Abbasid safe-conducts by the future al-Manṣūr in 754 and a handwritten signature (*khaṭṭ*) is also said to have been added to the document of 764 by ᶜĪsā.[17] An 'acknowledgement' (*iqrār*) was added to the reverse of some commercial contractual agreements; examples of this practice are found in the extant Egyptian papyri from the early-mid-ninth century.[18] The Egyptian papyri sometimes mention handwritten (*bi-khaṭṭ* or *bi-yad*) witness signatures from after the 790s.[19] All these developments appear to have had their origins in mid-to-late-eighth-century Iraq, and to have derived from indigenous Mesopotamian practice.[20]

The introduction to the documents of 802/5 include a further parallel with the commercial legal tradition in that they assert not only that the document is written by the party to the agreement,[21] but that they are of sound body and mind.

> Muḥammad/ᶜAbd Allāh . . . wrote (it) [for him],[22] in soundness of [his body][23] [and his mind][24] and lawfully [within][25] his power . . .

Legal competence was a concern of the ninth- and tenth-century Iraqi *shurūṭ* scholars.

> Abū Zayd (late ninth or early tenth century?)[26] used to write: 'The witnesses named in this document of ours have born witness to the acknowledgment of "so-and-so" to everything which is mentioned and described in this document of ours, in their cognizance of everything in it . . . in soundness of mind and body (*fī ṣiḥḥa min ᶜuqūlihim wa-abdānihim*) . . .' [27]

Again, such formulas derived from long-standing Near Eastern practice, but were only gradually assimilated as 'Islamic';[28] their appearance in the documents of 802/5, but not in the document from 776, might indicate an evolution in chancery practice.

ii. Terms

The terms comprise the longest section of each of the documents. As noted in Chapter 11, the content of the terms of such documents is open to some doubt.[29] However, for the purposes of analysing the formulas and lexicon of early Abbasid public documents, this problem is secondary; the formulas in which the terms are framed are much more likely to reflect actual Abbasid practice.

What is most striking about ᶜĪsā's *sharṭ* is its legalistic and formulaic style, which it shares with the variants of the 'Mecan Settlement': binding conditions

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are expressed with the verb *sharaṭa ᶜalā* 'to make conditional upon'; 'to acknowledge' (*ᶜarafa*) is used for the act of recognising the legitimacy of the agreement. Likewise, potential loopholes in the terms are closed down through lengthy qualifications about time, place and circumstance. For example, among the terms of 776, ᶜĪsā declares:

> I have no claim upon anything from that, (based upon) the past or in the future, nor desire, nor argument, nor treatise, nor is obedience required of (*al-ṭāᶜa ᶜalā*) anyone among you, nor upon the generality of Muslims, nor any pledge of allegiance – neither in the life of al-Mahdī Muḥammad the Commander of the Faithful, nor after him, nor after the possessor of the covenant of the Muslims (*walī ᶜahd al-Muslimīn*), Mūsā, nor while I am living, until I die.[30]

ᶜAbd Allāh al-Maᵓmūn's terms begin:

> The Commander of the Faithful has appointed me to the succession and the caliphate and all the affairs of the Muslims in his power after my brother, Muḥammad, the Son of Hārūn, the Commander of the Faithful. He has appointed me to the marches of Khurasan and its districts and all of its offices – its poor-tax, its tithe, its postal network, its *ṭirāz* workshops and other than that – in his life and after his death.[31]

Such convoluted legal strictures are quite different from anything found in the Umayyad period. This legal language coincides very closely in form, style and lexicon with the early Abbasid *amān* texts, where the same verbs and particles appear and where there is the same concern with the duration of obligations and with exhaustive lists and clauses that cover any items that have been overlooked. This verbose style has been described as adiposis, or 'fattening' – the tendency for traditions of contract and covenant to become more elaborate and repetetive over time.[32] It is well attested in the development of private contracts in early Islam, where elaborate lists are also used to close down potential loopholes.[33]

Another instance of adiposis is found in those of the terms (ii) of ᶜĪsā's agreement, which are found detached from the rest, and combined with the covenant clause (iii).[34]

> (iii) (Binding) upon me, concerning that, is the covenant (*ᶜahd*) of God, and whatever anyone from His creation has made binding (*iᶜtaqada*),[35] in the way of covenant (*ᶜahd*), compact (*mīthāq*), swearing of oaths (*taghlīẓ*), or affirmation of them (*taᵓkīd*) (ii) for hearing, obeying and sincere advice (*ᶜalā al-samᶜ wa'l-ṭāᶜa*

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> *wa'l-naṣīḥa*) to al-Mahdī Muḥammad the Commander of the Faithful and the possessor of his covenant, Mūsā, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, in secret and in public (*fi'l-sirr wa'l-ᶜalāniya*), in speech and in deed (*wa'l-qawl wa'l-fiᶜl*), in intention and in action (*wa'l-niyya wa'l-shadda*), in hope, in prosperity and in adversity (*wa'l-rajāᵓ wa'l-sarrāᵓ wa'l-ḍarrāᵓ*), helping them both and he who helps them, supporting he who supports them, whoever it may be, in the caliphate, which I have abandoned (*fī hādhā al-amr alladhī kharajtu minhu*).[36]

Whereas 'hearing and obeying' tend to stand alone in the Umayyad texts, this document adds 'sincere advice' (*naṣīḥa*) to the obligations and, later, the obligation of assistance (*muwālāt*). Both have some precedents in other early Arabian material.[37] However, the further qualification of these obligations is an innovation: they are obligations, 'in secret and in public (*fi'l-sirr wa'l-ᶜalāniya*), in speech and in deed (*wa'l-qawl wa'l-fiᶜl*), in intention and in action (*wa'l-niyya wa'l-shadda*), in hope, in prosperity and in adversity (*wa'l-rajāᵓ wa'l-sarrāᵓ wa'l-ḍarrāᵓ*)'. Neither this emphasis on the intention of the swearer of the oaths, nor the other circumstantial qualifications, are found in earlier extant Islamic documents for the pledge of allegiance.[38]

Some of this language is quranic. Although 'in secret and in public' is always connected to the giving of alms in the Qurᵓān,[39] it does also evoke God's covenant as the 'commerce which never fails':

> Those who rehearse the Book of God, establish regular prayer and spend (in charity) out of what We have provided for them, in secret and in public, hope for a commerce which never fails (*sirran wa-ᶜalāniyatan yarjūna tijāratan lan tabūr*). (Q 35.29)

It is particularly notable that the root *rāᵓ–jīm–wāw* follows in the Qurᵓān, as it does in the Abbasid text. However, the other pairings are not quranic: 'adversity' (*ḍarrāᵓ*) appears as *ḍarr*, but paired not with *sarrāᵓ* but with *nafᶜ* (both meaning 'prosperity'); 'speech' (*qawl*) is never paired with 'deed' (*fiᶜl*); 'intention and action' (*al-niyya wa'l-shadda*) do not occur in the Qurᵓān at all.[40] Closer analogues for some of these pairings can be found in the pre-Islamic poetry: just as *sirran wa-ᶜalāniyatan* occurs in the poetry,[41] *surr wa-ḍurr* occurs in a poem attributed to Ṭarafa and *al-qawl wa'l-fiᶜl* is found a poem of Zuhayr.[42]

A list of similar qualifications is found in the 'Meccan Settlement' of 802/5, and other early Abbasid texts display a similar concern with intent.[43] In the letter to the provinces about the *bayᶜa* to al-Mahdī, from *c*. 764, the pledge of allegiance should be made, 'with purity in your intentions, soundness in your breasts,

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fulfilling fully' (*bi-ṣiḥḥa min niyyātikum wa-salāma min ṣudūrikum wa-wafāʾ*).[44] Again, some of the lexicon is quranic. Throughout the Qurʾān, 'God knows the secrets of the breast' (*inna Allāh ʿalīm bi-dhāt al-ṣudūr*),[45] and Humanity's 'fulfilment' (forms deriving from *wāw–fāʾ–yāʾ*) of God's covenant brings about His blessings.[46] But both the elements of 'purity in your intentions' (*ṣiḥḥa min niyyatikum*) are unknown to the Qurʾān, and neither the form *salāma*, nor the pairing of its root, *sīn–lām–mīm*, with 'breasts' (*ṣudūr*), is quranic.

The emphasis on intention and action in political loyalty also recalls late Sasanian material on the same subject, as it was translated into Arabic from the mid-eighth century and after:

> A man sent a short letter (*ruqʿa*) up to Kisrā b. Qubādh (Khusro I, r. 531–79) in which he informed him that the intentions (*niyyāt*) of a group from among his intimates (*biṭānatihi*) had become corrupt (*qad fasadat*) and their private feelings had become malicious (*khabuthat ḍamāʾiruhum*) – among them were so-and-so and so-and-so.
>
> (Khusro) set down at the bottom of his letter:
>
> > I rule only over the outward appearance of bodies, not over intentions, judge with justice, not by whim, and inquire into deeds, not private feelings (*innamā amliku ẓāhir al-ajsām lā al-niyyāt wa-aḥkumu bi'l-ʿadl lā al-hawā wa-afḥaṣu ʿan al-aʿmāl lā ʿan al-sarāʾir*).[47]

The Sasanian king's *tawqīʿ* might be taken to indicate not that it was undesirable to rule over his peoples' intentions, but that it was impossible, and would therefore inevitably be unjust – all the more reason, then, to attempt to prevent such potential treachery by binding oath. As we saw in Chapter 8, Iranian political thought had a growing influence at the late Umayyad chancery. That the phrase *ṣiḥḥat al-niyya* also finds a precedent in a late Umayyad letter, composed by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, suggests that it was via the cadres of non-Arab secretaries that such concerns with 'secret thoughts' (*sarāʾir*) and 'intentions' (*niyyāt*) may have entered the language in which allegiance was understood.[48]

iii. Covenants

All three texts then invoke God's covenant (iii) as binding the parties to the agreement. The invocation of God's covenant was a feature of many agreements between monotheists in late antiquity,[49] and, as we have seen, it was also a feature of the earliest covenants between Muslims, as exemplified in the Qurʾān and in other early Arabic–Islamic texts. Indeed, all agreements between

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believers were understood to be governed by the covenant with God.[50] However, in Arabic–Islamic commercial agreements this was merely implicit; it was much more important in a contract pertaining to the imamate.

In the Umayyad documents, the covenant tends to take the form: 'You are bound in this by God's covenant and His compact' (*ᶜalayka bi-dhālik ᶜahd Allāh wa-mīthāquhu*).[51]

As one might expect, the covenant clauses of the early Abbasid texts are much fuller and more elaborate than anything found in Umayyad texts. In ᶜĪsā's *sharṭ* of 776 (where it appears in combination with 'ii', the 'terms' of the agreement), it reads:

> I have made over to them both (*jaᶜaltu la-humā*, i.e. al-Mahdī and Mūsā), and to the generality of the Muslims – from the people of Khurasan, and other than them – fulfilment (*al-wafāᵓ*) of which I have made conditional upon my soul, regarding the caliphate (*bi-mā sharaṭtu ᶜalā nafsī fī hādhā al-amr*) from which I have departed, and persistence in it. (Binding) upon me, concerning that, is the covenant (*ᶜahd*) of God, and whatever anyone from His creation has made binding (*iᶜtaqada*),[52] in the way of covenant (*ᶜahd*), compact (*mīthāq*), swearing of oaths (*taghlīẓ*), or affirmation of them (*taᵓkīd*) . . .

The variants of the 'Meccan Settlement' are very similar indeed to ᶜĪsā's text.[53] The shorter version of al-Amīn's document reads:

> I have given over (*aᶜṭaytu*) to Hārūn, the Commander of the Faithful,[54] and ᶜAbd Allāh b. Hārūn, on the conditions which I have imposed upon myself for them both (*ᶜalā mā sharaṭtu la-humā ᶜalā nafsī*), everything which I have named and written in this document of mine, from the covenant (*ᶜahd*) of God, His compact (*mīthāq*), the guarantee (*dhimma*) of the Commander of the Faithful, my guarantee, [the guarantees of my ancestors,][55] the guarantees of the believers, and the firmest things (*ashadd*) which God has imposed upon the Prophets and the Messengers and all His creation from his covenants and compacts (*ᶜuhūdihi wa-mawāthīqihi*), binding oaths (*al-aymān al-muᵓakkida*) of which God commands fulfilment, and change, or violation, of which He forbids (*allatī amara Allāh bi'l-wafāᵓ wa-nahā ᶜan naqḍihā*).

Verse 91 of *sūrat al-Naḥl* is the most important intertext for these documents.

> Fulfil God's covenant, when you have entered into it, and break not your oaths after you have confirmed them: indeed you have made God your guarantor; for God knows all that you do. (*wa-awfū bi-ᶜahdi'llāhi idhā ᶜāhadtum wa-lā tanquḍū*

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al-aymāna baᶜda tawkīdihā wa-qad jaᶜaltum Allāha ᶜalaykum kafīlan inna Allāha yaᶜlamu mā tafᶜalūna) (Q 16.91)

All this quranic language occurs in all the covenant clauses of the documents of 776 and 802/5 (with the exception of *kafīl*, which occurs at the end of the document of 776). The same vocabulary occurs in the Abbasid *amān* texts, as well as in a papyrus letter from the governor of Egypt to the Christian king of Nubia about a prior treaty (*ṣulḥ* and *ᶜahd*), from 758, where the quranic verse is quoted in full.[56] By the mid-eighth-century at the very latest, a consistent, quranic, 'Islamic' lexicon of political covenant before God was well established in the legal prose.

iv. Penalty clause

The penalty clauses of all the texts follow a pattern that is near-ubiquitous in such public agreements from the Abbasid period. The penalties of the 'oaths of the pledge of allegiance' (*aymān al-bayᶜa*), as they are known in later sources, first appear as a written formula in the *amān*s said to have been drawn up under al-Mahdī's father in the 750s.[57] They are replicated in ᶜĪsā's text, and in the documents of 802/5. ᶜĪsā's text is cited here.

> If I deviate from, change, substitute, corrupt, or intend anything other than that for which I have given these oaths, or call for anything different from what I have brought upon myself in this document for al-Mahdī Muḥammad, the Commander of the Faithful, for the possessor of his covenant, Mūsā, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, and for the generality of Muslims, or do not fulfil that, then: all of my wives on the day on which I wrote this document, or which I may marry for thirty years are divorced irrevocably as a divorce of interdiction (*ṭalāq thalāthan al-batta ṭalāq al-ḥaraj*); all my slaves on that day or which I may possess for the next thirty years are freed, for the sake of God; all my wealth – coin or movable goods, borrowed, landed, small or large, inherited, recently acquired, or earned from after today for the next thirty years – is alms (*ṣadaqa*) for the poor, which the agent (*al-walī*) will spend as he sees fit; and I am obliged to walk from Madīnat al-Salām barefoot to the noble House of God in Mecca as an obligatory solemn pledge (*nadhran wājiban*) for thirty years. There is no expiation for me, nor escape, except in fulfilment of it.[58]

The 'penalty clause' (iv), which invokes the 'oaths of the pledge of allegiance', gives the political agreement the character of a vow or oath (*nadhr*, *yamīn*), which needs to be expiated by a perjurer.[59] Ancient Aramaic and late antique Coptic

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commercial contractual formulas had included penalty clauses directed against those who violated the agreement (financial and spiritual, respectively). However, Arabic commercial contract documents did not include penalty clauses.[60] As discussed in Chapter 5, above, it seems likely that the triple penalty of the loss of property (including slaves) and wives and the obligation of a barefoot pilgrimage has some roots in Marwanid practice – the 'oaths of the *bayᶜa*' are linked in much later accouts to al-Ḥajjāj, ᶜAbd al-Malik's governor of Iraq – and, before then, to pre-Islamic Arabian oaths; they also have analogues in other traditions, not least Roman and Iranian law.[61] However, extant copies of Umayyad documents do not include any written mention of the oaths. Furthermore, the oath to walk to the Kaᶜba is not present in the accounts of Marwanid pledges. The addition is interesting in the light of the prominence of this vow in early Abbasid-era legal compilations,[62] as is the emphasis on manumission as one of the expiations, which also occurs as a common expiation in the later legal tradition.[63] Both expiatory acts also have a long pre-Islamic history as gestures of monotheist repentance and piety.[64]

As in the early Abbasid *amān*s, the penalties appear to have a formulaic character; they may have a somewhat symbolic status, as notional sanctions representing the outcast condition of the violator of God's covenant and the oath of allegiance by which the *umma* is constituted.[65] Certainly, the exclusion of the perjurer from the community of Islam is made explicit in some of the early Abbasid texts. Two of the *amān* texts state explicitly that the violator of the guarantees of the safe-conduct will become an unbeliever.[66] The same provision is included in the penalty clauses of the 'Meccan Settlement'. Al-Maᵓmūn's *sharṭ* is quoted here; the equivalent clause in al-Yaᶜqūbī and al-Azraqī's version of al-Amīn's document is very similar:

> If I violate (*naqaḍtu*) anything for which I have given conditions (*sharaṭtu*), and named in this document of mine [for Him],[67] or change (it), or alter (it), or break it (*nakathtu*), or act treacherously, then may I be cut off from God (*baraᵓtu*), from His sovereignty (*wilāyatihi*), from His religion, and from Muḥammad, the Messenger of God,[68] and may I meet God on the Day of Resurrection as one who does not believe in Him and an idolater (*kāfiran mushrikan*) . . . [*The 'oaths of the* bayᶜa' *follow*.][69]

Al-Ṭabarī's variant of al-Amīn's text is a document binding upon all Muslims, who are to respect the sequence of three successors agreed at Qarmāsīn/Kirmānshāh in 805. It introduces the 'oaths of the *bayᶜa*' with a clause that recalls the 'covenants' of ᶜĪsā's document of 776 and makes clear the outsider status of the perjurer:

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> If you alter or change any part of it, or if you fail to fulfil your undertaking or go against what the Commander of the Faithful has commanded you and made incumbent upon you in this present document of his, then God's guarantee (*dhimmat Allāh*), the guarantee of His Messenger, Muḥammad, and the guarantees of the believers and the Muslims, shall be null and void in respect of you . . . [*The 'oaths of the* bayᶜa' *follow*.][70]

These stipulations reflect the covenantal basis of Islamic religio-political thought and the importance accorded to loyalty to the imam in achieving salvation.[71] The association between the pledge of allegiance (*bayᶜa*) to a leader (*imām*, *amīr*), God's covenant (*ᶜahd*) and membership of the community of the saved (*umma*) is suggested by the Qurʾān itself and by the earliest evidence for the seventh- and early eighth-century caliphates.[72] The covenant was invoked to assert caliphal authority – to disobey the caliph was to violate God's covenant, which he represented on earth. In 802/5 al-Maʾmūn pledged that, were he to break his pledge of allegiance to his brother al-Amīn, he would be *kāfiran mushrikan*, just as the violators of the pledge of allegiance to ᶜAbd al-Malik were described as being in 'denial and unbelief' (*kafarū*) in 691.[73] At the same time, the covenant also restricted the caliph: al-Amīn would cease to be a Muslim if he violated the agreements of 802/5; al-Manṣūr is said to have pledged his caliphal status in his *amān* for ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜAlī in *c*. 756.

v and vi. Witnesses and conclusion

As is often the case with copies of documents preserved only in much later compilations, the witnesses and concluding formulas ('v' and 'vi') are difficult to separate from one another, and from their framing material in the narrative.

> God is a guardian, a guarantor and a witness for the fulfilment of it, and He is a sufficient witness (*wa-Allāh ᶜala'l-wafāʾ bi-dhālik rāᶜin kafīl shahīd wa-kafā billāh shahīdan*). As witnesses for ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā, for his acknowledgement of what is in this conditional document (*hādhā al-sharṭ*) are four hundred and thirty of Banū Hāshim and of the clients (*mawālī*), the companions (*ṣaḥāba*) of Quraysh, the viziers (*wuzarāʾ*), scribes (*kuttāb*) and judges (*quḍāt*). It was written in Ṣafar of the year 160, and ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā sealed it (*kutiba fī Ṣafar sana 160 wa-khatama ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā*).[74]

In ᶜĪsā's document, a typical terminal invocation of God as witness is followed by a summary list of human witnesses and a note of the date and the presence of Mūsā's seal. It is difficult to know now whether this is a later compiler's note of

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a now-lost witness list, date and seal, or whether it is close to what was actually written at the end of the original document. The former seems more likely – it is worth noting that at least part of the witness list for the 'Meccan Settlement' of 802 survives, and similar lists are found in extant papyri, as are actual seals. The passive, *kutiba*, is a common feature of dating formulas on the papyri.[75]

There are also two apparent anomalies in the conclusion: the witnesses listed are slightly different from those said to have given the pledge of allegiance in the mosque at al-Ruṣāfa, and the date – Ṣafar 160 (November–December 776) – would place the text's composition at least two days after the ceremony. Because it was the witnessed, oral declaration that was legally binding, the dispositive document had a somewhat secondary status. It is possible that the formal, witnessed document was drawn up after the ceremony in the mosque, and with a slightly different group of official legal witnesses in attendance; there are other examples of the process of witnessing stretching over two consecutive months.[76] The lack of a more specific date is the norm in the papyri and is matched in the dating of the 'Meccan Settlement', too.

The variants of the two documents of al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn in 802/5 also show the same evidence of abbreviation by later redactors and compilers:

> (Muḥammad b. Hārūn wrote it in his handwriting [*katabahu . . . bi-khaṭṭihi*]).[77] [The witness list (32 or 39 names)] bore witness. It was written in Dhū al-Ḥijja of the year 186 (*kutiba fī Dhī al-Ḥijja sana 186*).[78] (The shorter version of al-Amīn's *sharṭ* of 802/5.)

> God is a guardian, a guarantor and a witness for you, and He is a sufficient reckoner (*wa-Allāh ʿalaykum bi-dhālik kafīl wa-rāʿin wa-kafā billāh ḥasīban*).[79] (The longer version of al-Amīn's *sharṭ* of 802/5.)

> The (same)[80] witnesses bore witness (to that)[81] who bore witness to (his brother),[82] Muḥammad, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful.[83] (The shorter version of al-Maʾmūn's *sharṭ* of 802/5.)

> Sulaymān, the Son of the Commander of the Faithful, bore witness and so on, and it was written in Dhū al-Ḥijja of the year 186.[84] (The longer version of al-Maʾmūn's *sharṭ* of 802/5.)

Only al-Ṭabarī's version of al-Amīn's document concludes with the expected formula invoking God as a witness. The absence of God as a witness is extremely unusual – one suspects subsequent emendation.[85] As discussed at the end of Chapter 11, the full witness list is found only in the first of the two texts as they

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are recorded by al-Yaᶜqūbī and al-Azraqī. This is highly unusual in a later copy of an eighth-century caliphal document, and very likely reflects the original text of 802.

CONCLUSIONS: THE SCRIBAL TRADITION AND THE LEGAL TRADITION

The early Abbasid 'dispositive documents' for the succession were a new genre of legal text. As we have seen, it was the need for public, binding agreements (*shurūṭ*) about the succession in the 760s and after that was the catalyst for their invention. Their structure and lexicon are very similar indeed to early Abbasid documents for safe-conduct (*amān*), the first examples of which date from the 750s. These close parallels suggest that those who composed the *shurūṭ* agreements about the succession borrowed from established practices for the safe-conduct. After all, they were also public, conditional agreements under oath. However, such evidence as there is suggests that the early Abbasid safe-conducts were themselves a significant departure from established practice; Umayyad and earlier Arabic safe-conduct documents appear to have been shorter and less elaborate.

That this departure from Marwanid patterns is to be explained by the particular conditions of the Abbasid Revolution and its aftermath is suggested by the significant continuities in the personnel of the caliphal administration between the Marwanid and Abbasid caliphates. Although some of these Abbasid 'dispositive documents' for the succession may have been written out by one of the parties to the agreement, the documents were technical works of legal court prose, the original composition of which was in the hands of the class of professional scribes (*kuttāb*) who worked in the *dīwān al-rasāʾil*. The same class of men were also responsible for the promulgation of caliphal decisions in writing – for 'state letters' in general. Many – perhaps most – of these scribes were *mawālī* from particular indigenous communities in Mesopotamia, notably Ḥarrān; others were natives of Fars and Afghanistan. Many had served under the Marwanids, or were the sons of men who had.

Two families are specifically linked to the production of extant Abbasid documents for accession and succession – those of Ḥajar b. Sulaymān al-Ḥarrānī and al-Ṣubayḥ al-Ḥarrānī.[86] Both had served in the Umayyad *dīwān*. (A third Ḥarrānī, Ibrāhīm b. Dhakwān, was a senior administrator and vizier for Mūsā al-Hādī, though his name cannot now be connected to any copy of a specific document.[87]) Another important figure in the early administration was the vizier of al-Manṣūr's son al-Mahdī, Abū ᶜUbayd Allāh Muᶜāwiya b. ᶜUbayd Allāh b. Yasār al-Ashᶜarī (d. 786/787), who served as al-Mahdī's personal secretary, then

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his vizier and head of his *dīwān al-rasāʾil*.[88] Abū ʿUbayd Allāh had been the *mawlā* of a member of the Syrian army in the Syrian district (*jund*) of Palestine and his father, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yasār, had been a secretary to the governor (*ṣāḥib al-maʿūna*) of the district of Jordan.[89] The scribe of one of the Abbasid *amān*s, which parallel and pre-date the succession documents, was the famous Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. *c*. 756), most likely from Fars, in western Iran. In the 740s Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ had served as a scribe to the Umayyad governors of Kirmān, before entering the service of the 'uncles' from the Banū ʿAlī.[90] The Barmakid dynasty of administrators, from Nawbahār, near Balkh in Afghanistan, may also have had some association with the Umayyads, but it was the Abbasid Revolution that brought this family to the centre of imperial power: Khālid b. Barmak was a pillar of the Revolution who then backed al-Mahdī's succession to al-Manṣūr; his sons and grandsons dominated the caliphate for much of the rest of the century, before finally falling from power in 803, making way for the careers of many of their protégés, notably al-Faḍl b. Sahl and Ismāʿīl b. Ṣubayḥ.[91]

Given the importance of these documents for the early Abbasid succession, it is also pertinent that almost all their scribes were drawn from regions that had been in the cultural orbit of Sasanian Iran, where the writing of contracts for the royal succession appears, from the available evidence at least, to have been customary (unlike in the Roman empire). Both the *ʿAhd Ardashīr* and the *Letter of Tansar* refer to the use of writing at the succession; the Paikuli inscription is also testimony to the importance of the *public record* of the legitimacy of a succession in contested circumstances.[92] It seems likely that the written contract for the succession and its written promulgation – already a feature of political practice in late Marwanid times – would have received new impetus at an Abbasid court which had a distinctly Iranian character. Even more than the late Marwanid caliphs, al-Manṣūr and his immediate descendants looked to the heritage of the ancient empires for models for the performance of imperial monarchy; the demotion of ʿĪsā coincided with the foundation of the palace-city of Madīnat al-Salām; the 'Meccan Settlement' followed the foundation of the Bayt al-Ḥikma ('House of Wisdom') there, where a library of pre-Islamic texts in Persian and other languages was established, and where the caliphally sponsored translation of these texts into Arabic began to gain momentum.[93]

However, in the specific form and content of the early Abbasid documents for the succession, it is the parallels with contemporaneous developments in the use of written contract in Iraqi Arabic–Islamic commercial law that are most striking. Although the covenant and penalty clauses have no analogue in commercial contract, and are a reminder of the particular solemnity of the vow in question, the writing-down of such previously oral components of the oath does parallel developments in commercial contract. Other elements of the documents have

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more exact commercial parallels: 'autograph declarations' by witnesses begin to appear on the extant Egyptian commercial papyri at the very end of the eighth century; a concern with the understanding of the terms, and the sound mind and body of those contracting an agreement, which is found in the documents of 802/5, are paralleled in the legal tradition composed in the ninth and early tenth centuries. Many of these developments in Egyptian commercial contract appear to have been a function of the adoption of non-Arabian practices as 'Islamic' in Iraq during the eighth and ninth centuries. (Similarly, the written mention of the 'handclasp' or *ṣafqa*, by which the pledge of allegiance was contracted, anticipates tenth-century Fāṭimid commercial contracts in the papyri.[94])

Given the presence of scholars at the early Abbasid court as authorities in the later *shurūṭ* texts, it seems plausible that the legal and religious scholars had a direct influence on the composition of the documents. The assent of religious scholars would have been particularly important in seeking to make the changes to the succession in 776 acceptable and in attempting to close off religious critiques of the agreements of 802/5 from the court factions that were bound by them. As we have seen, a group of legal scholars who were close to al-Mahdī were important in providing a legal opinion to persuade ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā of the legitimacy of surrendering his claim to the caliphate in 776.[95] Judges were among the witnesses to his *sharṭ*, as the judge of Mecca was among the witnesses of the 'Meccan Settlement'.[96] Al-Ṭabarī's introduction to the 'Meccan Settlement' also describes how 'the legal scholars and the judges expended their intellectual efforts' in composing the text (there is no mention of them in al-Yaᶜqūbī's or al-Azraqī's introductions).[97] The scribes who composed the texts and the scholarly advisers and witnesses are united in the person of Ismāᶜīl b. Ṣubayḥ, the scribe to Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Maʾmūn, who was a descendant of a non-Arab Marwanid scribe and also a narrator of *ḥadīth*.[98]

The *shurūṭ* documents for the succession are important evidence for early Abbasid political culture, which was rooted both in the Sasanian royal heritage and also in the evolving Arabic–Islamic legal tradition (which combined the heritage of Arabian practice with 'Islamised' provincial custom). One specific manifestation of this three-way intersection between the evolving legal and religious tradition, the cultural heritage of pre-Islamic Iraq and Iran and these documents of public law may be the documents' concern with 'intention' (*niyya*). The compilation of legal material said to have been made in the mid-to-late eighth century by Mālik b. Anas (d. 796) contains no references to 'intention' (*niyya*) in the taking of oaths. However, the *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, a treatise on taxation said to have been composed for Hārūn al-Rashīd, includes a *ḥadīth* that discusses the pledge of allegiance to the imam in terms of the 'handclasp of the hand and the innermost part of the heart' (*ṣafqat yadihi wa-thamrat qalbihi*).[99] Later,

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ninth-century collections of *ḥadīth*, such as those of al-Bukhārī (d. 870) and Ibn Māja (d. 887), include a 'chapter concerning intention in oaths' (*bāb al-niyya fi'l-aymān*) and a 'chapter concerning intention'.[100] The correlation between the later legal material and the early Abbasid texts suggests that the new, legalistic concern with intention in the language of oaths in the mid-to-late eighth century, which, as we have seen from parallels in the *tawqīᶜāt* material, perhaps had some roots in Iranian political thought, eventually found its way into the ninth-century canonical *ḥadīth* collections.

NOTES

1. Ṭab., iii, 352.
2. The written nomination of successors is attested for the succession to Sulaymān in 717 (although, as discussed above, there are problems with this) and it was not a *sharṭ* document, like those from 764, 776 and 802.
3. See above, pp. 27–8, 43, 63.
4. Wansbrough, 'Safe-conduct'; Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 261, 276.
5. See above, Introduction, n. 30, and pp. 27, 63, 169; for *amān*s, see, e.g., Ṣaf.[1], ii, nos 47, 126, 502.
6. Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 262.
7. Wakin, *Function*, 15ff.
8. 776: Ṭab., iii, 474–6; cf. Ṣaf., iii, 138–41. 802/5: Yaq., ii, 502–9, and Azr., i, 161–8; Ṭab., iii, 654–6 (where differences in the MS of Ibn al-Jawzī are noted); cf. Ṣaf., iii, 194ff.
9. Not in al-Ṭabarī's or al-Yaᶜqūbī's version of al-Amīn's oaths.
10. Only in al-Yaᶜqūbī's and al-Azraqī's version of al-Amīn's oaths.
11. Not in al-Yaᶜqūbī's version of al-Maᵓmūn's *sharṭ*.
12. Not in al-Yaᶜqūbī's version of either *sharṭ*.
13. Khan, *Bills, Letters and Deeds*, 63–4. Cf. Rāġib, 'Sauf-conduits', e.g. nos III and IV.
14. Wakin, *Function*, 44; Khan, *Bills, Letters and Deeds*, 64. For another apparent continuity from pre-Islamic Arabian practice, see Khan, 'The pre-Islamic background'.
15. Cf. Q 7.137; al-Azdī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 170; Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 256.
16. See above, pp. 187–8, 217–18.
17. Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 248–9, 274–5; see above, p. 230.
18. Wakin, *Function*, 47.
19. Khan, *Bills, Letters and Deeds*, 173–4; Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 274–5. Cf. Wakin, *Function*, 66.
20. Wakin, *Function*, 2ff., 38ff.; Khan, *Bills, Letters and Deeds*, 173; Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 56–9.
21. Yaq., ii, 501; Azr., 160.
22. Not in al-Ṭabarī's or al-Yaᶜqūbī's version of al-Amīn's oaths.
23. Only in al-Yaᶜqūbī's and al-Azraqī's version of al-Amīn's oaths.
24. Not in al-Yaᶜqūbī's version of al-Maᵓmūn's *sharṭ*.
25. Not in al-Yaᶜqūbī's version of either *sharṭ*.
26. Wakin, *Function*, 19–20.
27. al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Shurūṭ*, I.2.160.

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28. Wakin, *Function*, 67, n. 2.
29. See above, pp. 223–4.
30. Ṭab., iii, 474.
31. Yaq., ii, 507.
32. Yaron, 'Defension clauses', 18.
33. Wakin, *Function*, 38, 61ff.
34. The displaced position of these terms in ᶜĪsā's text is probably to be explained by the close association between the obligation of obedience – 'hearing and obeying' – with God's covenant.
35. *ᶜalayya bi-dhālik ᶜahd Allāh wa-mā iᶜtaqada aḥad min khalqihi*. In note 'a' de Geoje comments: *Sic videtur legendum pro ᶜahd Allāh waᶜtaqida ᶜalā aḥad in codice*. Either way, the meaning arrived at above seems most likely.
36. Ṭab., iii, 475; following Ṣaf., iii, 140; cf. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxix, 185–6 (H. Kennedy).
37. IS, iv, 254, and see above, Ch. 1, n. 14, and pp. 63–4.
38. For possible precedents from 738, in an Alid *bayᶜa*, see Bal.(D), ii, 527; Ṭab., ii, 1687.
39. Q 2.274; Q 14.31; Q 35.29.
40. AB, s.vv.
41. Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, s.v.
42. Arazi and Masalha, *al-ᶜIqd*, 54 (Zuhayr, 91, l. 5), 38 (Ṭarafa, 63, l. 16).
43. e.g. Yaq., ii, 503–4.
44. IAṬ, fo. 128a; Ṣaf., iii, 126.
45. Q 5.7 *et passim*; AB, s.v.
46. In over forty places: AB, s.vv.
47. Ibn ᶜAbd Rabbihi, *al-ᶜIqd*, iv, 222 (ii, 234). Cf. ᶜAbbās, *ᶜAhd Ardashīr*, 56; Zakeri, 'Early Persian Apophthegmata', 289.
48. ᶜAbbās, *ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 194, no. 4.
49. Wakin, *Function*, 58, n. 3; see above, pp. 6, 45, 52.
50. Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 264–5.
51. See above, 169, 173, Ch. 9.
52. See above, n. 35.
53. It is very similar to al-Maᵓmūn's version, except that al-Maᵓmūn's text includes the proviso that it is dependent upon al-Amīn fulfilling his obligations to him. Al-Ṭabarī's (longer) version of al-Amīn's text is unique: it is in the second-person plural (that is, it applies to the Muslims as a whole, not just to al-Amīn); it also refers to three *wulāt al-ᶜuhūd*, indicating that it dates from after 805.
54. In al-Yaᶜqūbī: 'the Commander of the Faithful, Hārūn'.
55. Only in al-Azraqī.
56. Hinds and Sakkout, 'A letter from the governor of Egypt', 218, 226; Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 264–5.
57. Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 268–71.
58. Ṭab., iii, 475–6.
59. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 64–5; Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 268.
60. Wakin, *Function*, 58–9.
61. See above, Ch. 5, n. 52.
62. e.g. Mālik, *Muwaṭṭāᵓ*, bk. 22 (*Kitāb al-Nudhūr wa'l-aymān*).
63. al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 257ff., bk 83 (*Kitāb al-Aymān wa'l-nadhr*).

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64. *ODB*, 'Manumission' (A. J. Cappel), 'Pilgrimage' (G. Vikan).
65. After all, there are few references to anyone actually performing these expiations. The actual penalty for violation of the pledge of allegiance was usually death. An exception is found at Ṭab., iii, 603.
66. Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 248–9, 255–6, 268–71, 279.
67. Only in al-Azraqī.
68. al-Azraqī: 'His Messenger'.
69. al-Yaᶜqūbī: *kāfiran bihi mushrikan*; al-Azraqī: *kāfiran mushrikan bihi*; al-Ṭabarī: *kāfiran mushrikan*.
70. Ṭab., iii, 659; tr. after al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxx, 191 (C. E. Bosworth).
71. Cf. Crone, *Political Thought*, 6ff., 17ff., 21–3.
72. See above, Chs 2 and 4.
73. It is interesting to note that the vocabulary of perjury and unbelief had become more complex: a *kāfir mushrik* was the worst kind of perjurer.
74. Ṭab., iii, 476.
75. Dietrich, *Briefe*, 74; Wakin, *Function*, 47, n. 2.
76. Wakin, *Function*, 7, 48.
77. Only in Yaq., ii, 506.
78. Yaq., ii, 506–7; Azr., 165–6. For the witness list, see above, pp. 224–7.
79. Ṭab., iii, 660.
80. Only in al-Azraqī.
81. Only in al-Azraqī.
82. Only in al-Yaᶜqūbī.
83. Yaq., ii, 509; Azr., 168.
84. Ṭab., iii, 662.
85. The terminal lines of such copies of documents are often garbled in transmission.
86. Muḥamamd b. Ḥajar is said to have composed a document about the succession to Hārūn al-Rashīd in *c*. 779–80 (see above, pp. 208–10). Ismāᶜīl b. Ṣubayḥ composed Hārūn al-Rashīd's letter to the provinces about the 'Meccan settlement' in January 803; he therefore probably contributed to the production of the two *sharṭ* documents themselves in December 802 (see above, p. 221, and Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 185, 190–3, *et al*.). His nephew Yūsuf b. al-Qāsim b. Ṣubayḥ was a scribe for the Barmakids, who managed the promulgation of Hārūn al-Rashīd's succession in Baghdad and in the provinces (see above, pp. 217–18, and Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 134, 141, 179, *et al*.).
87. Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 117ff.
88. Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 76, 91ff., ii, 730; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Abū ᶜUbayd Allāh' (S. Moscati); Kimber, 'Vizierate', 70ff. He oversaw the demotion of ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā in 764 (see above, pp. 196–7, 230).
89. Jah., 126; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 94, n. 2.
90. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ibn al-Muḳaffaᶜ' (F. Gabrieli); Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', esp. 271ff. The authorship of the other *amān* document is less certain: Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 276 and n. 174.
91. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Barāmika or Āl Barmak' (W. Barthold; D. Sourdel); Crone, *Slaves*, 67, 176–7; Bosworth, 'Abū Ḥafṣ ᶜUmar al-Kirmānī'. See now van Bladel, 'Bactrian background'.
92. See above, pp. 4, 163–4.
93. Balty-Guesdon, 'Le *Bayt al-Ḥikma*'; Zakeri, 'ᶜAlī ibn ᶜUbaida', 89; Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 53ff.

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94. Khan, *Bills, Letters and Deeds*, 175.
95. See above, p. 206.
96. Ṭab., iii, 476, and above, pp. 226–7.
97. Ṭab., iii, 654; after tr. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxx, 183 (C. E. Bosworth).
98. Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 126.
99. Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 6.
100. al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 373, bk 83.23; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, bk 37 (*Kitāb al-Zuhd*), §26.

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PART IV

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THE MIDDLE ABBASID CALIPHATE (809–865)

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INTRODUCTION

The first two-thirds of the ninth century were framed by two destructive civil wars, in 811–19 and 865–70. The first was a war of succession fought between Khurasan and Iraq. Khurasan backed Hārūn al-Rashīd's second heir, al-Maʾmūn, against the new caliph, al-Amīn (r. 809–13), in Iraq. After Iraq's defeat, the Iraqi Abbasids and the Abnāʾ (that is, the descendants of the revolutionary army) lost their leading place in the government of the empire; they were replaced by local dynasts in the provinces – most importantly the Ṭāhirids of Khurasan – and, especially after the accession of al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 833–42), by a new elite cavalry guard composed predominantly of slaves of Central Asian origin. These 'Turks' (Ar. *atrāk*, sing. *turk*) dominated at the centre of the caliphate and in the western provinces of Egypt and Syria. The new regime had some significant military successes in the 820s and 830s, both against the Byzantines on the Anatolian frontier and, on the internal frontiers of Azerbaijan and Ṭabaristān, against rebels. However, the extent of the dislocation caused by the civil war, and the marginalisation of the old Iraqi elites by new Khurasani, Transoxianan and Turkish ones, appear to be reflected in the decision to move the caliphal capital to the new foundation of Samarra, 100 kilometres up the Tigris from Baghdad, in 835–6.

The second ninth-century civil war (865–70) was a consequence of factional conflict within the Samarran elite that spilled over into a war between the predominantly Arab and Iranian elites in Baghdad and the Turkish commanders at Samarra. The assassination of the caliph al-Mutawakkil in 861 by his Turkish guards was the opening shot in the conflict, but war broke out only in 865. Five years of warfare and unrest confirmed the Turkish commanders' power over the caliphate, but at further expense to the integrity of the empire. Between 854 and 873, the Ṭāhirid dynasty, who had ruled Khurasan in the name of the Abbasids,

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were driven back and then overthrown by the Ṣaffārid dynasty, who went on to rule Sistan and Khurasan in almost complete independence from the caliphs. After his accession in 868, the Turkish governor of Egypt, Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, retained most of the Egyptian tax revenue, and used the new resources to conquer much of Syria for his largely independent principality. In Ṭabaristān an independent Zaydī Shiᶜite state was founded in 864, which did not recognise Abbasid authority at all. (Further west, North Africa – never very tightly controlled – had gained a substantial degree of independence under the Aghlabids and other dynasties in the latter part of the eighth century; Spain had always been independent of the Abbasids). The civil war also triggered a prolonged and widespread slave-revolt among the agricultural slaves in Iraq itself; the rebellion began in 869 and was defeated only in 883. Although Abbasid power would rally in the later ninth century, and again early in the tenth century, the empire never recovered from the catastrophic damage that these conflicts caused in Iraq, nor from the cost – in terms of both tax revenue and political prestige – of losing control over the increasingly independent provinces.[1]

The evolution of religious and political identities among the rapidly growing convert population of the empire also presented continuing ideological challenges to Abbasid authority.[2] The words and deeds of the Prophet, as interpreted by the scholars, were increasingly widely accepted by Muslims as paradigmatic in law, as in social and religious practice in general.[3] Just as the early Abbasids had sought to co-opt legal and religious scholars in legitimating their revolution in the eighth century, in the ninth century they forged an alliance with scholars who propounded a 'Muᶜtazilite' (or, perhaps better, 'Ḥanafī rationalist') theological and legal stance. This led to the *miḥna*, or 'Inquisition', which was begun by al-Maᵓmūn in 833 and continued until *c*. 847. Through the *miḥna*, the caliphs and their chief *qāḍī*, Ibn Abī Dāwūd (d. 854), sought to promote a specific theological position, often imposing it by force, especially on those religious scholars who performed functions for the state.[4]

Armed rebellion remained a serious threat to the caliphate. At the beginning of the ninth century, the extension of state power provoked local, anti-Islamic rebellions, which were sometimes quite serious, such as that of Bābak in the 820s in Azerbaijan. Such uprisings contested the legitimacy of the whole Islamic political enterprise by appealing to pre-Islamic ideologies, and thus were dealt with very severely. But precisely because they did not claim any Islamic legitimacy, and because they generally lacked effective imperial ambition, they were in some respects less of a threat than 'internal', Islamic critiques of caliphal power.

The most dangerous challenges to Abbasid authority continued to be assertions of direct descent from the Prophet as a qualification for the imamate. A series of rebellions in Syria, Iraq, the Ḥijāz and Yemen, all with various Shiᶜite

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complexions, coincided with the first civil war and its immediate aftermath.[5] After the suppression of these revolts, the caliphs of the first half of the ninth century tended to pursue a tolerant policy towards the Shia. Then, after the accession of al-Mutawakkil in 847, the caliphs often promoted a more-or-less proto-Sunni, 'traditionist' line. At the same time, they periodically imprisoned Alid imams and destroyed tombs that had become a focus for Alid devotion. The more militant strands of Shiᶜite thought continued to form the legitimatory basis for rebellion against the Abbasids, particularly when central authority was weak: the foundation of an independent Zaydī principality in Ṭabaristān in the 860s has already been noted; the same period saw the beginning of the Ismāᶜīlī movement in Iraq and western Iran.[6]

Caliphal succession: the end of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd*

The changing relationship between the imperial centre and the provinces had a significant impact on the transfer of caliphal authority. In the long eighth century between 685 and 813 almost every caliph that came to power had received the pledge of allegiance as a nominated successor to the caliphate (*walī al-ᶜahd*). The handful of exceptions had all come to power during a few years of civil war (743–4, 749–50 and perhaps 786). This pattern of caliphal succession by covenant, which had been established under the Umayyads, and had been perpetuated by the first seven Abbasids, ended during the first years of the ninth century. Al-Maᵓmūn made an abortive attempt to nominate a non-Abbasid in 817, but was predeceased by him in 818 and does not appear to have formally named a *walī al-ᶜahd* for the rest of his lifetime (although a disputed succession on his death in 833 has made it difficult to be sure). After occasional revival in the period *c.* 850–75 (interrupted by the civil war of 865–70), the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* was not employed again.

Aspects of 'Muᶜtazilite' theology, which inspired the *miḥna* of 833–47, have been proposed as an explanation for the initial hiatus between 817/833 and *c.* 850:[7] many 'Muᶜtazilites' emphasised the elective nature of the imamate and the importance of the imam's merit, independent of his genealogy; furthermore, the brief restoration of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* under al-Mutawakkil coincided with the end of the *miḥna* and the abandoning of the rationalist doctrine of the 'createdness' of the Qurᵓān.[8] However, 'rationalist', or 'Muᶜtazilite', thought remained influential at al-Mutawakkil's court, where the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* was temporarily restored and, as its star waned against strictly 'traditionalist' ideas, the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* ended permanently. The explanation for the abandonment of such an important political institution should instead be sought in the *Realpolitik* of the Muslim empire. In the caliphate of the ninth century, power over the provinces

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beyond Iraq was increasingly delegated to local elites, and so there was less need (and less potential) for the caliphal centre to cultivate close connections with provincial armies. For their part, the provincial elites, having received legitimation from the caliph, were in practice almost independent of Iraq, and thus had less need to compete for control of the centre via the succession.

Furthermore, the military and administrative elites that dominated Iraq in the ninth century appear to have recognised that the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* tended to be a source of weakness for the caliph's supporters, in that their rivals could back a candidate against their own choice. Power over the proclamation of the new caliph allowed a single clique to retain their power while maintaining the fiction of his election through the pledge of allegiance given after the previous caliph's death. The *wilāyat al-ᶜahd*'s brief restoration in the mid-ninth century coincided with the fall of this clique and what appears to have been a conscious, but short-lived, effort by the vizier ᶜUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān to return to an older model of caliphal succession.

In some respects, therefore, the end of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* reflected the concentration of power at the caliphal court in Iraq, even if that concentration was only possible because of Iraq's much-diminished control over many of the provinces. The end of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* also perhaps reflected the increasing political weakness of the caliph himself, unable to use the nomination to manipulate the army and administration.[9] When conflict over the caliphate between Abbasids broke out again, in the tenth century, it took the form of the palace coup, led by the fragmenting imperial military and administrative elite, but did not involve recourse to claims to the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd*.

Caliphal Ceremonial in the Middle Abbasid Caliphate

As the end of the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* shows, the rituals of the ninth-century caliphate took place in a changed political landscape. The caliph's range of action was now often quite limited; factions within the military elite tend to dominate an Iraqi imperial centre whose influence over the provinces was in decline. Accounts of the accession ceremonies of the caliphs reflect this shift: they tend to be highly metropolitan in their concerns, focusing on the elites of Baghdad and Samarra; there is almost no mention of the pledges of allegiance in the provinces after the reign of al-Maᵓmūn. This may in part be a function of the provenance of the accounts, but even sources composed in the provinces do not mention the provincial *bayᶜa*. With the devolution of regional power to governors and near-independent potentates, the importance of the provincial pledges of allegiance to the caliph diminished; the loyalty of the main imperial army (or, as al-Ṭabarī put it, *jund al-sulṭān*, or 'the troops of the ruling power') was what mattered to the

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caliph and his supporters. The caliph's being named on coins and in the Friday sermons became the main expressions of his authority beyond his capital.[10]

In what follows, the history of middle Abbasid accession and succession in this period is outlined in three short chapters. The first surveys the civil war of 811–19 and the reigns of al-Maʾmūn (r. 813–33), al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 833–42) and al-Wāthiq (r. 842–7). As we have seen, this period saw the emergence of new military elites in the caliphate, drawn from Iran, Transoxiana and the Turkish steppes. The extent of the break with the Iraqi elites of the Abbasids and the Abnāʾ is marked by al-Muʿtaṣim's construction of a new caliphal capital at Samarra.

From the point of view of the history of ceremonial, al-Muʿtaṣim's relocation of the caliphal capital from Baghdad to Samarra in 836 is particularly important because of the archaeological remains of the new city, which allow us to situate the literary accounts in a material context (see Map 2). Among the most frequently reproduced images of Samarra are aerial views of the vast ruin-field of street-grids and walls, eroded to near-ground level, and disrupted by alluvial flow and agriculture, which stretches for more than 40 kilometres from south to north along a narrow strip of the flat, gravelly plain of the east bank of the Tigris (its total area is 57 square kilometres).[11] Whereas the palaces and mosques of eighth-century Madīnat al-Salām and its environs have long since disappeared under subsequent development in Baghdad, Samarra ceased to be a caliphal capital after 892 and was largely abandoned by the mid-tenth century.[12] The ruin-field is what remains of three main phases of development, in 836–47, 847–61 and *c.* 870–83, the first two of which fall within the chronological parameters of this book (and were the most significant in terms of the amount of construction that took place).[13]

The period of the foundation of the new city also witnessed significant changes in the ceremonial of the caliphal court. Among these, the introduction of coronation rituals is particularly notable. Like the Iranian King of Kings, al-Muʿtaṣim and subsequent caliphs endowed senior commanders and courtiers with crowns and belts. The forms of the ritual appear to reflect the continued importance of Iranian heritage in Abbasid political culture, but the two specific impulses behind the adoption of the rituals (which are given only laconic treatment by the pious al-Ṭabarī) were the need to integrate Turkish and Transoxianan 'outsiders' into the imperial elite and the tendency for the caliphs to assert their authority through elaborate ceremonial as their military and political power declined.

Chapter 14 examines the reign of al-Mutawakkil, which saw an attempt to resist Turkish domination by the vizier ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān and a deliberate invocation of the era of Hārūn al-Rashīd, through a revival of ceremonial of the *wilāyat al-ʿahd* (albeit on the rather smaller stage of the mid-ninth-century

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caliphate). ʿUbayd Allāh's failure brought about the murder of al-Mutawakkil in 861 and a decline into civil war, which saw series of caliphs promoted and deposed at Baghdad and Samarra. The accession ceremonies of 861–5 are the subject of Chapters 15 and 16. Although the accounts of them reflect partisan stances in the conflict of the 860s, they are remarkable for their detail (itself probably a function of the importance of these events to contemporaries). Most notable of all, written *bayʿa* documents, to be read out at accessions in 861 and 865, are recorded by al-Ṭabarī. These important texts, which reflect a pattern that remained normative in subsequent centuries, are analysed in Chapter 16.

NOTES

1. See Kennedy, 'The decline and fall'.
2. The evidence is difficult, but it seems that the rate of conversion to Islam of non-Arabs increased sharply in the ninth century, especially in the cities: Bulliet, *Conversion*.
3. Crone, *Political Thought*, 219ff.
4. The nature and purpose of the *miḥna* has generated considerable discussion and speculation; see Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 106ff. On the origins and development of Muʿtazilism, see *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Muʿtazila' (D. Gimaret). On 'Muʿtazilism' and the ninth-century caliphs, see Melchert, 'Religious policies'.
5. Tor, 'An historiographical re-examination', 106–7.
6. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ḳarmaṭī' (W. Madelung).
7. Chejne, *Succession*, 119. Al-Maʾmūn may or may not have designated a successor; see below, pp. 265–7. For al-Wāthiq's refusal to do so, see Yaq., ii, 590.
8. Melchert, 'Religious policies'.
9. Chejne, *Succession*, 118.
10. After *c*. 850, potential heirs were also named on the coins, in a departure from the tendency to name the *walī al-ʿahd* only on coins associated with his authority as a governor or military commander; see Treadwell, 'Notes on the mint at Samarra', 146.
11. The recent war may have caused serious harm to the remains: Northedge, *Samarra*, 1.
12. On Samarra, see Herzfeld, *Geschichte der Stadt Samarra*; al-Sāmarrāʾī, *Sāmarrāʾ*; Rogers, 'Sāmarrā'; Robinson, *Medieval Islamic City*; Northedge, *Samarra*.
13. Northedge, *Samarra*, 98–100, 239–42.

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CHAPTER

13

FROM THE CIVIL WAR TO SAMARRA (809–847)

Hārūn al-Rashīd died at the Khurasani city of Ṭūs on 24 March 809. His first heir, al-Amīn, was his deputy in Baghdad, 1,000 kilometres to the west; al-Maʾmūn, the second successor, was at Marw, 300 kilometres to the east. Accounts of Hārūn's death tend to focus on the importance of intelligence and communications in obtaining and maintaining power.[1] The *ṣāḥib al-barīd* ('chief of the post') in Khurasan sent news to his counterpart in Baghdad, who informed the heir apparent, al-Amīn. A few days later, on 4 April 809, a second *barīd* messenger arrived in Baghdad, sent by Ṣāliḥ, the most senior of Hārūn's sons present at Ṭūs. Ṣāliḥ had presided over the burial of Hārūn (the right of the most senior relative present),[2] before dispatching the formal announcement of the death and the caliphal seal, sceptre and mantle, by now well established as the insignia of the caliphate.[3] Another message was sent north-east, to the second *walī al-ʿahd*, al-Maʾmūn, at Marw. Pledges of allegiance were immediately taken by both brothers from the notables and soldiers at Baghdad and Marw.

At Baghdad, al-Amīn is said to have moved from the palace of al-Khuld, which was on the east bank of the Tigris, opposite the Round City, to the original palace of al-Manṣūr within its walls. The following day – a Friday – the death was announced publicly and 'the people' (*al-nās*) were commanded to be present at the mosque. Al-Amīn led the prayers before ascending the *minbar*, from where:

> He praised God, and magnified Him, announced the death of al-Rashīd to the people, enjoined himself and the people to bear the death patiently, promised good to them, laid out hopes, offered security to people of all persuasions and

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> took the pledge of allegiance from the majority of his family, his senior courtiers, his clients and commanders. Then he went in (to the palace). He delegated the taking of his pledge of allegiance from those who remained from them to his father's uncle, Sulaymān b. Abī Jaᶜfar, who took their pledges of allegiance and ordered al-Sindī (b. Shāhak) to take the pledge of allegiance of all the commanders and the remainder of the army and ordered 14 months pay for the army in Madīnat al-Salām, and the same (number of) months' (pay) for the closest of his courtiers.[4]

There were a number of precedents for the delegation of the taking of the *bayᶜa* from lesser figures to another member of the dynasty.[5] The advanced payment of the army had also become customary.[6] However, the taking of the *bayᶜa* by a senior secretary is unprecedented in accounts of earlier metropolitan pledges of allegiance – it might reflect implied criticism of al-Amīn.[7] On receiving the same news at Marw, al-Maʾmūn is said to have 'entered the Dār al-Imāra of Abū Muslim, announced the death of al-Rashīd from the *minbar* (of the mosque), tore his clothes, ordered the giving of money to the people, took the pledge of allegiance to his brother and then to himself and gave 12 months pay to the army'.[8]

In the following two years, the already strained relations between al-Amīn, in Iraq, and al-Maʾmūn, in Khurasan, collapsed. As usual, the sources focus on senior courtiers. At al-Amīn's court, those promoting confrontation were his vizier, Faḍl b. al-Rabīᶜ b. Yūnus, and his *ṣāḥib dīwān al-rasāʾil* and *kātib al-sirr* ('private secretary'), Ismāᶜīl b. Ṣubayḥ al-Ḥarrānī.[9] In Marw, al-Maʾmūn's vizier, al-Faḍl b. Sahl b. Zadhānfarūkh, and his brother al-Ḥasan were said to have been influential in provoking conflict. Those loyal to the new caliph were highly conscious of the need to oust al-Maʾmūn from the succesion. Among them were the old, Iraqi elite at Baghdad – the Abbasid family, the Abnāʾ, the *mawālī*, from whom Faḍl b. al-Rabīᶜ was appointed, and the Baghdadi *kuttāb*, including Ismāᶜīl b. Ṣubayḥ. Al-Maʾmūn's partisians were predominantly drawn from the provincial elites in Khurasan, among whom was al-Faḍl b. Sahl; they sought greater autonomy from imperial control and thus needed to maintain al-Maʾmūn's claim to the succession against 'Amīnist' agitation for his replacement.

Tension mounted very fast.[10] By 810 al-Maʾmūn and his vizier ruled Khurasan as an autonomous province, with the backing of the local Khurasani elite, including, notably, the Ṭāhirid dynasty. Al-Maʾmūn's severing of the Khurasani *barīd*'s communication of information to Iraq, his withholding of tax and tribute, his obstruction of Iraqi messengers and agents and his use of the *khuṭba*, *sikka* and *ṭirāz* to assert his own independent authority could all be interpreted as gestures of rebellion against his brother.[11] For al-Amīn's part, the addition in 809–10 of 'Mūsā the Son of the Commander of the Faithful' to the Friday prayer marked

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out his own son as a likely future heir (and a rival, therefore, to al-Maʾmūn); then, in 810–11, the replacement of al-Maʾmūn by Mūsā al-Nāṭiq bi'l-ḥaqq in the *khuṭba* signalled al-Maʾmūn's deposition from the succession. In some accounts, a second son and successor, ʿAbd Allāh al-Qāʾim bi'l-ḥaqq, was also recognised.[12] Coins bearing Mūsā's *laqab* are extant from the mint of Damascus from 194/809–10, which was part of the governorship from which al-Amīn deposed al-Muʾtamin, the third nominated successor of Hārūn al-Rashīd, in the same year.[13](The survival of double-weight dirhams minted in the name of al-Amīn's Abbasid mother, Zubayda b. Jaʿfar b. Abī Jaʿfar, suggests both the importance of the ability to reward supporters and the use of donative coins as tools of propaganda.[14]) In 811–12 al-Amīn appointed his fourth cousin ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ to the western *thughūr*. ʿAbd al-Malik had been imprisoned in Hārūn's purges in 803, just prior to al-Muʾtamin's appointment as *walī al-ʿahd*.[15]

War between Khurasan and Iraq began in late March 811, when the two armies met near Rayy, in Jibāl in west Iran. There, al-Maʾmūn's Khurasani commanders, Harthama b. Aʿyān and Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, killed al-Amīn's general, the senior member of the Abnāʾ, ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Māhān. In the next months they pressed west and won a series of victories against al-Amīn's supporters.[16] Al-Qāsim b. Hārūn (the former al-Muʾtamin) and his uncle al-Manṣūr b. al-Mahdī joined al-Maʾmūn's forces.[17] By late August 812 Baghdad was besieged by al-Maʾmūn's forces. Vast resources were expended by both sides on maintaining, and competing for, the allegiance of troops.[18] In September 813, after thirteen months of destructive siege warfare, Muḥammad al-Amīn was killed by Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn's troops as he sought to flee the city. The insignia of the caliphate – as in other monarchic polities, held in some sense to *be* the caliphate – were transferred to al-Maʾmūn.[19]

The Marw caliphate and the nomination of ʿAlī al-Riḍā as *walī al-ʿahd*

After 813 conflict in Iraq did not end; al-Maʾmūn's victory may have appeared almost pyrrhic. The conflict, culminating in regicide, had split the caliphate almost irrevocably. (That the historiography focuses on al-Amīn's status as an oath-breaker is undoubtedly a legacy of this continued division, and the need to justify the conflict from a 'Maʾmūnid' perspective.[20]) A series of Alid rebellions against al-Maʾmūn's authority took place, as well as revolts in the name of Abbasid pretenders. The Abbasid revolts appear to have been motivated by the resentment of the old Baghdadi elites at the consequences of their defeat by Khurasan in the civil war. The decline of their role in the empire had been made very clear by al-Maʾmūn's decision to continue to rule from the Khurasani capital

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of Marw, which had been his capital since shortly after his nomination as *walī al-ᶜahd* in *c*. 800. Authority over Iraq was delegated to al-Ḥasan b. Sahl, brother of the vizier, al-Faḍl b. Sahl, and to the Khurasani commander Harthama b. Aᶜyan; Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn was appointed to the Byzantine frontier.

This continuing conflict between Khurasan and Iraq is the context in which al-Maᵓmūn's decision to nominate an Alid as his successor should probably be understood. Having suppressed a number of Shiᶜite revolts, but with a rebellious Baghdad once more under siege in 816–17, al-Maᵓmūn summoned ᶜAlī b. Mūsā b. Jaᶜfar to Marw, where, on 2 Ramaḍān 201/24 March 817, he was proclaimed *walī al-ᶜahd* and given the *laqab* al-Riḍā min Āl Muḥammad, 'The Chosen One from the Family of Muḥammad'. As was customary, messages were sent to the provinces, including Baghdad, announcing the decision, ordering that the pledge of allegiance be taken to ᶜAlī al-Riḍā and ordering a change in the ceremonial clothing of the caliphate from black, which had been customary since the revolution of 747–50, to green.

ᶜAlī al-Riḍā was a direct descendant of the Prophet via the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima and his first cousin ᶜAlī, and thus was considered to be the imam by some with Alid sympathies. This remarkable break with Abbasid dynastic succession, and its very public expression in the change in the livery of the caliphs' officials, have prompted numerous interpretations. It has recently been suggested that the episode gives insight into the weakness of character of al-Maᵓmūn, who appears dominated by his Sahlid advisers in many of the sources;[21] the decision has also been seen as reflecting eschatological expectations at al-Maᵓmūn's court.[22] However, the nomination of ᶜAlī al-Riḍā need no more reflect the domination of al-Maᵓmūn by his courtiers than many of the earlier nominations of heirs through which cliques expected to secure their future access to the resources of the caliphate, and the eschatology that is said to have motivated the nomination is in fact found in a letter directed at reconciliation with the Iraqi Abbasids *after* al-Riḍā's death, not at justifying the appointment itself.[23]

Earlier interpretations see the nomination of al-Riḍā as reflecting Alid sympathies at al-Maᵓmūn's court,[24] or – perhaps more likely – as seeking to include the Alids within a broad, Hashimite definition of the caliphate (and thereby discrediting exclusivist Alid definitions of caliphal legitimacy).[25] This latter explanation still retains some explanatory power: the call for the caliphate of *al-riḍā min āl Muḥammad* had been the slogan behind which the supporters of the Abbasid revolution had rallied and it still retained rhetorical potency; it had been invoked in the promotion of many Abbasid heirs and it was invoked by Iraqi rebels against al-Maᵓmūn after 813. The nomination can also be seen as an assertion of caliphal authority: Crone and Hinds emphasise al-Maᵓmūn's assertion of his right as God's deputy to nominate whom he pleased as his successor, in the context

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of what they see as declining Abbasid legitimacy.[26] Kimber also argues that the nomination of al-Riḍā should be understood as an assertion of caliphal authority, but one directed as a 'warning' to the restive Abbasid elite in Baghdad.[27] The public nomination of an Alid rather than an Abbasid was a reminder of the potential further loss of status and power to which their continued resistance to Marw could lead. It probably did also serve to divide and weaken the besieged Baghdadis, by appealing to the Alid sentiments that the earlier wave of rebellions had revealed to be widespread.

The documents that promulgated the nomination of al-Riḍā are not recorded in the extant ninth- and early tenth-century sources. However, they do appear in texts from the thirteenth century and after. A copy of the letter to the people of Medina proclaiming al-Maʾmūn's nomination of ʿAlī al-Riḍā, and urging the taking of the pledge of allegiance to al-Maʾmūn and al-Riḍā, occurs in Ṣibt b. al-Jawzī's (d. 1256) *Mirʾāt al-zamān*, in al-Qalqashandī's (d. 1418) *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* and al-Majlisī's (d. 1699) *Biḥār al-anwār*.[28] Ṣibt b. al-Jawzī and al-Majlisī also record an autograph declaration by ʿAlī al-Riḍā himself, which is said to have been handwritten by him on the reverse of al-Maʾmūn's letter to the Medinans.[29] Both texts were translated into Italian by Gabrieli in 1929;[30] al-Maʾmūn's letter was translated into English by Crone and Hinds in 1986.[31]

These scholars accept these texts as authentic.[32] However, for all that very late sources can include very early material, the late date of the documents, which can be securely dated only to 400 years after their original composition, must give pause. Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, the earliest extant source for both texts, wrote extensively on the Alids and the Shia; one contemporary suspected him of Shiʿite tendencies.[33] Al-Qalqashandī does cite the 'master of the *ʿIqd*' for al-Maʾmūn's letter, but no extant work by the Andalusian author of *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi (d. 940), includes the text.[34] Nothing in the content of either text clearly impugns it, but, until a comprehensive study of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī's works has been made, conclusions about their origins must remain somewhat provisional. If they are authentic, then they conform to the pattern of earlier Abbasid documents in many respects, but depart from them in their assertion of the caliph's right to choose his successor: the sense of *riḍā* as 'God's approval (of the caliph's divinely inspired choice [*khīra*])' is emphasised.[35]

> The Commander of the Faithful has not ceased . . . communing with God in a desire for His blessing in that (regard) and asking Him day and night to inspire him with that in which His pleasure (*riḍā*) and obedience (*ṭāʿa*) to Him (are to be found), employing his mind and insight in his quest and his search among the people of his house from the descendants of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib . . . His choice (*khīra*) – after having sought God's blessing and

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> having exerted himself in the decree of His right among His servants from the two families as a whole – has been ʿAlī b. Mūsā b. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, on account of what he has seen of his perfect excellence . . .[36]

The autograph declaration of ʿAlī al-Riḍā, said to have been appended to al-Maʾmūn's letter, finds precedents in ninth-century practice in contract law, where an *iqrār* ('acknowledgement') might be added to the *verso* of a contract document; the description of the witnessing process also echoes contemporaneous practice.[37] What was unprecedented, of course, was the nomination of a Hashimite who was an Alid and not an Abbasid.

THE RESTORATION OF THE CALIPHATE TO IRAQ

Whatever the orginal motives that may have driven the nomination of ʿAlī al-Riḍā, the termination of the succession plan was important to the restoration of caliphal authority over Iraq. In February 818, al-Faḍl b. Sahl, the vizier who was perceived to be behind the nomination of ʿAlī al-Riḍā, was assassinated.[38] ʿAlī al-Riḍā's death occurred at Ṭūs seven months later, in early September 818, after al-Maʾmūn and his court had camped there *en route* from Marw to Iraq. The removal of the Alid heir and the vizier who could be blamed for his nomination, together with the progress of Harthama in his siege of the Abbasid rebels in the city, set up the circumstances for a reconciliation with the Iraqi Abbasids and the Abnāʾ. It took the form of a triumphant caliphal entry into Baghdad, in which a series of public rituals of compromise and reconciliation restored relations with the Baghdadi elite but affirmed their recongnition of the authority of al-Maʾmūn and his Ṭāhirid allies.[39]

Al-Maʾmūn's progress from Ṭūs towards the former capital took another eleven months (no doubt, it was carefully timed to coincide with the progress of Harthama's siege). He travelled west to Jurjān and from there to Rayy, where he stayed for a few days in June 819. From there he took two months to cover the remaining 400 kilometres to Nahrawān, a town one day's travel east of the capital.[40] At Nahrawān, al-Maʾmūn met his Khurasani commander Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, who had travelled from his frontier post, at al-Raqqa. Then he received 'his family (i.e. the Abbasids) and the notables, who greeted him (formally as caliph)' (*ahl baytihi wa-wujūh ahl Baghdād fa-sallamū ʿalayhi*). The reception of Ṭāhir ahead of the other members of the elite marked out the new status of the frontier commander at the caliphal court. Having received the royal honour of being met on the approach to Baghdad, al-Maʾmūn then set out for the east bank of the Tigris, staying at the palace of al-Ruṣāfa.[41]

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On his arrival at Baghdad, the court were still obliged to wear the green livery imposed at the time of the nomination of ᶜAlī al-Riḍā:

> Al-Maᵓmūn's entry into Baghdad, approaching from Khurasan, was on a Saturday, with fifteen nights remaining of Ṣafar in the year two hundred and four (11 August 819, actually a Sunday).[42] His dress and that of all his entourage (*aṣḥābuhu*) were green, their short green Persian coats (*aqbiya*), caps (*qalānis*), short lances (*ṭarrādāt*) and banners (*aᶜlām*) . . . no one had entered into his presence except (wearing) green. All the people of Baghdad dressed thus. They used to tear off anything black they saw, except for caps; one or another person used to wear them, fearfully and apprehensively; and as for a Persian coat or banner, no one dared to wear anything like that, or carry it.[43]

Then, either a week or a month after al-Maᵓmūn's arrival in Baghdad, he had the black clothing of the Abbasid dynasty restored.

> When (al-Maᵓmūn) saw (the people's) obedience to him in wearing green, and their loathing of it, he convened an assembly on Saturday, still wearing green. When they had gathered in his presence, he called for black garments, and put them on, and called for a black robe of honour, and bestowed it upon Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, and bestowed black Persian coats and caps to a number of the commanders. When they came out from the caliph's presence wearing black, the remainder of the commanders and the army in general removed their green garments and put on black.[44]

The ritual of *khilᶜa*, the formal bestowal of a robe of honour, again marked out the Khurasani Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn as the senior military commander in the caliphate; the Ṭāhirids had replaced not only the old Baghdadi elites, but also their Khurasani competitors, the Sahlids. At the same time, the return of the caliph to his Iraqi capital in a victory procession and the restoration of the Abbasid black livery affirmed the restoration of Iraq as the imperial capital of the empire and the continued status of the Abbasid family within the Banū Hāshim.

THE ACCESSION OF AL-MUᶜTAṢIM (R. 833–42)

The assassination of ᶜAlī al-Riḍā had left al-Maᵓmūn without a *walī al-ᶜahd*. Unlike his Abbasid predecessors, he appears to have left the succession unresolved for some years, and may never have formally nominated an heir. Given the tendency for the succession to become a focus for competing elements in the army, this may have been part of a deliberate policy of balancing the factions

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within the new military elite of the empire, which comprised soldiers recruited from Khurasan and Transoxiana, as well as western Arab units and the Abnāʾ.[45]

Certainly, when al-Maʾmūn died on campaign in Cilicia on 9 August 833, factions within the army backed different candidates for the succession. Some of the new troops from Iran and Transoxiana, as well as the Abnāʾ, seem to have supported al-Maʾmūn's son al-ʿAbbās. However, al-Maʾmūn's brother Abū Isḥāq (later al-Muʿtaṣim) had the benefit of a guard of predominantly Turkish cavalry, whom he had recruited and who were loyal only to him. As usual, by far the fullest early account is that of al-Ṭabarī, who implies tension between uncle and nephew but states that al-Muʿtaṣim had been named by al-Maʾmūn as his heir on his deathbed. In contrast, al-Dīnawarī states that al-ʿAbbās had been made *walī al-ʿahd* and was forced to abdicate by al-Muʿtaṣim in a ceremony that recalled 776 and 786. It is impossible now to be sure what actually happened. But it does appear that al-Ṭabarī (and Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ) preserve something close to an 'official' account, whereas there are convincing features in al-Dīnawarī's narrative of usurpation, and other sources also hint at irregularity in the succession.

According to al-Ṭabarī, both al-Muʿtaṣim and al-ʿAbbās were present at al-Maʾmūn's camp when he died after a short, sudden illness. Al-Ṭabarī says that after he had fallen ill al-Maʾmūn dispatched letters nominating his brother Abū Isḥāq al-Muʿtaṣim as his heir.[46] (Perhaps tellingly, the letters are not reproduced.) However, some of the tensions between the regular army (*jund*) and Turkish commanders personally loyal to al-Muʿtaṣim can be seen in another report, which occurs a little later in al-Ṭabarī's *History*. At al-Muʿtaṣim's accession in Cilicia, some of the regular army are said to have rioted in the name of al-ʿAbbās and to have been calmed only after he appeared before them to state that he 'had pledged allegiance to his paternal uncle and acclaimed him as caliph' (*qad bāyaʿtu ʿammī wa-sallamtu al-khilāfa ilayhi*).[47] Furthermore, two of al-Muʿtaṣim's first acts as caliph were to order the demolition of al-ʿAbbās's castle at Tyana and to make a public show of alliance with his nephew in a formal entry into Baghdad.[48]

In his *Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, al-Dīnawarī presents a very diffferent version of the succession.

> (Al-Maʾmūn) had taken the pledge of allegiance for the succession to the caliphate to his son al-ʿAbbās b. al-Maʾmūn and made him his deputy in Iraq. When he died, while he was at the river of al-Budandūn (Gk Podandos, near Tarsus, in Cilicia), his brother Abū Isḥāq Muḥammad b. Hārūn al-Muʿtaṣim bi'llāh gathered around himself the commanders and the army and summoned them to pledge allegiance to him. They pledged allegiance to him and he set out from Tarsus until they reached Madīnat al-Salām. He entered it and deposed (*khalaʿa*) al-ʿAbbās b. al-Maʾmūn from it (i.e. the caliphate), and took the pledge of allegiance for the

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caliphate. His arrival in Baghdad was at the beginning of the month of Ramaḍān in the year 218 (late August 833). He remained there for two years, then went with his Turks to Samarra.[49]

Al-Dīnawarī states that al-ᶜAbbās had been formally appointed as his father's *walī al-ᶜahd*. He also seems to imply that al-ᶜAbbās was not on the Byzantine campaign, but in Baghdad, acting as al-Maᵓmūn's deputy. This may be an attempt to bolster the claim that al-ᶜAbbās was the legitimate *walī al-ᶜahd*; it does appear that he was indeed on campaign in Anatolia in both 832 and 833, and the destruction of Tyana and the appointment of a new commander on the frontier perhaps supports this.[50] However, the record of the entry into Baghdad being followed by the taking of a pledge of allegiance (the pledge is unmentioned in al-Ṭabarī) is typical of earlier Abbasid caliphal accessions; recognition at the capital by the Hashimites and the Abnāᵓ was a prerequisite for securing power. Had al-ᶜAbbās had any claim on the throne, then the public deposition mentioned by al-Dīnawarī would also have been required; vestiges of the same deposition may be present in al-Ṭabarī's account of al-ᶜAbbās's calming of the troops in Cilicia.

Al-Dīnawarī was from Dīnawar, in the Jibāl, where Harthama b. al-Naḍr al-Khuttalī was appointed as governor in 838. Harthama had been governor of Marāghah and one of the senior Transoxianan commanders who supported al-ᶜAbbās's claims to the succession. However, he escaped execution and was reconciled with al-Muᶜtaṣim thanks to the intervention of another Transoxianan, al-Afshīn.[51] Although al-Dīnawarī may have been partisan, doubt about the succession may also be indicated in al-Yaᶜqūbī's *History* (composed in Ṭāhirid Khurasan and Ṭūlūnid Egypt), where the accessions of both al-Muᶜtaṣim (r. 833–42) and his son and successor, al-Wāthiq (r. 842–7), are distinguished by being introduced with the verb *waliya* ('he came to power') rather than the more common *būyiᶜa* ('he received the pledge of allegiance'), or *malaka* ('he became ruler').[52] Only ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz and Hārūn al-Rashīd are also marked out in this way.[53] This suggests that the verb indicates an irregular accession,[54] perhaps one brought about by a single clique within the polity: al-Muᶜtaṣim's son al-Wāthiq was installed as caliph in 842 by what became a ruling clique comprising the Turkish commanders and their allies among the *kuttāb*; al-Muᶜtaṣim appears to have seized power with the help of his predominantly Turkish private guard.[55]

In 838, less than five years after al-Muᶜtaṣim's accession, a plot within the army to install al-ᶜAbbās b. al-Maᵓmūn as caliph in his place (or to restore al-ᶜAbbās to the caliphate) was exposed and the army was purged.[56] Al-ᶜAbbās himself was imprisoned and killed; one source says that about seventy commanders were executed.[57] The leader of the plot was one al-Ḥārith al-Samarqandī;[58]

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others included Aḥmad b. Khalīl b. Hishām,[59] ʿUjayf b. ʿAnbasa,[60] al-Shāh b. Sahl,[61] ʿAmr al-Farghānī,[62] al-Sindī b. Bukhtāshah[63] and Harthama b. al-Naḍr al-Kuttalī.[64] The roster makes it clear that a large faction within the commanders from al-Maʾmūn's provinces of Khurasan and Transoxiana had loyalties to the former caliph's son; al-Muʿtaṣim's support lay primarily with his Turkish bodyguard, and with another of his personal clients, the Transoxianan commander, al-Afshīn (thanks to whom Harthama, later governor of Dīnawar, was spared).[65]

The purge left the Turkish slave bodyguard of the caliph as the dominant group in the caliph's field army. The rapid advancement of the Turkish slave-soldiers is exemplified by the career of Ashinās, who had been bought as a slave by al-Muʿtaṣim, but first was appointed as governor of Egypt and then, in early 840, was invested with all the western provinces still in the gift of the caliph: Syria, Egypt and the Jazīra.[66] With this appointment to the west, Ashinās was the equal of the Ṭāhirids, with their plenipotentiary powers in the east. At about the same time, al-Muʿtaṣim crowned (*tawwaja*) Ashinās and 'enthroned' (*ajlasa . . . ʿalā kursī*) him; he also endowed him with a belt (*washshaḥa*).[67] Such a coronation ritual was a very recent innovation in the ceremonial of the caliphal court. The first examples are mentioned in connection with the campaigns led for al-Muʿtaṣim by the Transoxanian commander al-Afshīn in 837–8.[68] (Indeed, al-Muʿtaṣim himself is said to have worn a jewelled crown at an audience with his entourage on one occasion, perhaps in his capacity as the military commander of the Turks.[69]) The sources give no indication of the purpose of the coronation of Ashinās, but one suspects that, as with the marriage of Ashinās's son to the daughter of one of the free noble commanders two years earlier, it was an investiture intended to assert noble status equal to that of the free Iranian and Transoxianan nobility, who are sometimes called 'kings' (*mulūk*) in the sources. In the following year (late September 841), Ashinās accompanied a grandson of ʿĪsā b. Mūsā on the *ḥajj*, and was given temporary authority over the *ḥajj* route, being named in the prayers and sermons at each mosque.[70] Leadership of the *ḥajj* was ordinarily reserved for a member of the cadet branch of the Abbasid family; the honouring of a non-Abbasid alongside him was, like the coronation, an innovation, one directed at a more narrowly 'Islamic' legitimacy rather than noble or royal status – the Turks were almost as much religious outsiders as they were cultural and political aliens.[71]

THE FOUNDATION OF SAMARRA

Further evidence for the extent of the conflict over the succession to al-Maʾmūn is al-Muʿtaṣim's abandonment of Baghdad as a capital. Only months after his accession, al-Muʿtaṣim began the construction of the new garrison capital at Samarra.

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The caliph and his court moved to the new city in 835–6. The move is said by al-Ṭabarī to have been the result of hostility to the presence of al-Muʿtaṣim's new Turkish guard in Baghdad.[72] Given al-Dīnawarī's suggestion that al-ʿAbbās had been the governor of Iraq, and the divisions in the army, with the Turks al-Muʿtaṣim's most loyal supporters, it is very likely that his contested accession had made the city particularly inhospitable to the new caliph. With the hated Turks removed from Baghdad, he was able to maintain some influence there through his Ṭāhirid allies, who continued to govern Khurasan as they had under al-Maʾmūn, but who also had significant landholdings at the former capital.[73]

Al-Muʿtaṣim's new garrison city was centred on the Dār al-Khilāfa (the modern Jawsaq al-Khāqānī, but more properly the Dār al-ʿĀmma; see Map 3). Its triple-arched public gateway ('Bāb al-ʿĀmma') faced west and overlooked gardens and, beyond them, the river Tigris. This gateway is the most striking remant of the palace complex today. The Bāb al-ʿĀmma was approached by a large processional staircase that added to its imposing height. The palace itself was a huge assembly of iwans, halls and courtyards, constructed on an orthogonal and cruciform plan over half a kilometre in length, with vast axial processional routes within it and through the surrounding garrisons. Adjacent to it, to the north, was a second, large, enclosed palace complex, 330 metres wide, which is probably al-Jawsaq al-Khāqānī of the early texts, built for al-Muʿtaṣim by Khāqān al-ʿUrṭūj.[74] Lacking a circuit wall, the new foundation marked a distinct break from the circular and polygonal foundations of al-Manṣūr, al-Mahdī and Hārūn al-Rashīd.

Like its Iraqi and North Mesopotamian precursors, the palace-city of Samarra was a stage for the public performance of the rituals of Abbasid monarchy, both the quotidien and hebdominal – assemblies at court, the Friday prayers and parade-ground reviews – and the more occasional: the public trials and executions of high-status prisoners and the promotion and demotion of the caliphs themselves. However, despite these continuities in the function of palaces from the eighth century, the foundation of Samarra by al-Muʿtaṣim resembled al-Manṣūr's foundation of Baghdad in that it coincided with an era of invented tradition and the transformation of the public communication of status and power. As under al-Manṣūr, the engine of this change was the creation of a new imperial elite.

One manifestation of this change was the introduction of the ritual of coronation for senior commanders and adminstators, which remained a feature of ninth-century caliphal ritual.[75] Indeed the capacity of members of the elite to demonstrate their wealth and status was central to the political life of Samarra; the pomp reflected a hierarchy with the caliph at its apex. The character of the new military elites shaped both the scale and the forms of this display. The racetracks and polo grounds there attest to the peacetime function of the cavalry skills of the

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Central Asians, and it is clear that the importance of the cavalry also contributed to other ceremonies.[76] Although the mounted procession was a ubiquitous feature of Near Eastern royal ritual, and processions and the river Tigris had been an important feature of Abbasid ritual at Baghdad, Samarra was a city constructed on a scale, and in a relationship to the river, that match the processions on horseback and by boat described in the sources.[77] The scale both of the palaces themselves, and of the boulevards and gardens that separated them, suggest large assemblies and parades; the main road through al-Muʿtaṣim's original foundation was over 60 metres wide at its broadest point.[78]

THE ACCESSION OF AL-WĀTHIQ (R. 842–7)

Al-Muʿtaṣim died six years after the move to Samarra, on 5 January 842. Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ and al-Ṭabarī give laconic reports of the accession of his son al-Wāthiq: 'the pledge of allegiance was given' (*būyiʿa*).[79] Al-Yaʿqūbī, however, gives a fuller report, which notes the tensions between Samarra and Baghdad, and the continued importance of the Ṭāhirid dynasty in maintaining caliphal authority at the old capital:

> Hārūn al-Wāthiq bi'llāh b. Abī Isḥāq took power (*waliya*)[80] . . . on the day al-Muʿtaṣim died, which was Thursday with 11 days remaining from Rabī I 227 (5 January 842) . . . The moment that Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm gave his pledge of allegiance, he sent him to Baghdad. He set out that same night and reached Baghdad before dawn broke. He appointed governors over the city's districts and prisons, summoned the commanders and the notables and took the pledge of allegiance from them. The common soldiers (*ʿawāmm al-jund*) and the mob fell upon (*wathaba bi-*) Shuʿayb b. Sahl, the *qāḍī* of the east side in Baghdad and destroyed his house. Ishāq sent Jaʿfar M.shh and Ibrāhīm al-Dyrj and a group with both of them. They extricated Shuʿayb b. Sahl and brought him to the house of Isḥāq.[81]

The tensions between Baghdad and Samarra were expressed in the mobbing of the 'rationalist' judge; the state theology and its representatives had become a focus for Baghdadi resentment at Samarran and Turkish domination of the caliphate. As yet, however, the resentment could still be managed by the Samarran's Ṭāhirid allies and did not present a serious threat to their control of the caliphate.

As the conflict in Baghdad indicates, the same military and administrative elite retained power under al-Wāthiq. The vizier, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Zayyāt, and the chief *qāḍī* and architect of the *miḥna*, Aḥmad b. Abī Dāwūd, retained their posts. In 843, eighteen months after his accession, Hārūn al-Wāthiq enthroned and crowned Ashināṣ in a ceremony very similar to that performed by

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his father three years earlier.[82] (For al-Suyūṭī [d. 1505], this coronation marked the first delegation of caliphal power [*sulṭān*].[83]) The continuity in the Turkish military and the 'rationalist' (or 'Muᶜtazilī') administration was also reflected in the decision to retain Samarra as the capital. A new palace, al-Hārūnī, was constructed on the banks of the Tigris just over 2 kilometres west of the Dār al-Khilāfa. Al-Wāthiq was buried in it in 847.[84]

NOTES

1. e.g. Ṭab., iii, 765–71; Jah., 273–7. For vivid descriptions of Hārūn's audiences at his deathbed, see Ṭab., iii, 731, 737–8; Jah., 273–4.
2. Cf. Ṭab., iii, 519, 598.
3. For the insignia, see Ṭab., iii, 771.
4. Ṭab., iii, 764–5; cf. Din., 388–9; Yaq., ii, 521, 524–6.
5. See above, p. 206. Sulaymān b. Abī Jaᶜfar was a loyal supporter of al-Amīn; see above, pp. 219, 225.
6. Ṭab., iii, 544–5, 601. The term *māl al-bayᶜa* ('*bayᶜa* money') does not occur in the sources from before the tenth century: *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Māl al-bayᶜa' (H. Kennedy).
7. On al-Sindī, see Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 154, 166, 187, 190, 215, 217.
8. Ṭab., iii, 771–2; cf. Din., 388.
9. Din., 389; Yaq., ii, 537; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 189, n. 2, 190–3, ii, 731–2.
10. Ṭab., iii, 771ff.
11. Ṭab., iii, 777, 796–7.
12. Ṭab., iii, 777, 795–6, 818.
13. Bacharach, 'Al-Amīn's designated successor'; Shamma, *Aḥdāth*, 24, 40, 98, no. 631.
14. Ilisch, 'Münzgeschenke', pt 2, 15–16. Al-Amīn's unique Hashimite descent on both his maternal and paternal sides was an important asset, and Zubayda was a prominent and powerful figure at his court: Shamma, *Aḥdāth*, 125ff.
15. Ṭab., iii, 841ff; Cobb, *White Banners*, 29–30, 93.
16. On the three commanders, see Crone, *Slaves*, 75, 177, 178.
17. Ṭab., iii, 868.
18. e.g. Yaq., ii, 534–5; Ṭab., iii, 847–9, 865.
19. Ṭab., iii, 916; ᶜ*Uyūn*, 338; cf. Benveniste, *Indo-European Language*, 324. Other insignia included the parasol (*mushammas*) and tents (*fasāṭīṭ*): Ṭab., iii, 1183. On the parasol (*miẓalla*), *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Miẓalla (C. E. Bosworth et al.); for its Iranian antecedent, see the hunting relief at Taq-i-Bustan: Tanabe, 'Iconography'.
20. e.g. Ṭab., iii, 950.
21. Tor, 'An historiographical re-examination', 127–8.
22. Madelung, 'New documents', 339–45.
23. Cf. Bayhom-Daou, 'Al-Maᵓmūn's alleged apocalyptic beliefs'. *Iraqi* (as opposed to Khurasani) eschatological expectation *may* be reflected in al-Amīn's naming the seventh and eighth Abbasid caliphs by the unusual honorifics al-Nāṭiq bi'l-ḥaqq ('The Speaker of Truth') and al-Qāᵓim bi'l-ḥaqq ('The One Who Establishes the Truth') (see above, p. 261) and in the circulation of apocalyptic *ḥadīth* from *c*. 815–16 (200 H), prophesying cycles of seven imams followed by the Mahdī (see Madelung, 'New documents', 345–6). Al-Amīn

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is also said to have minted coins referring to prophecies naming Mūsā as 'the Victorious' (*al-muẓfar*), and 'a king mentioned in the revealed book' (*malik khaṣṣa dhikruhu fi'l-kitāb al-muẓhar*): Ilisch, 'Münzgeschenke', 15.

24. Gabrieli, *Al-Maʾmūn*.
25. Chejne, *Succession*, 115–16; Sourdel, 'La Politique religieuse'; Zahniser, 'Insights from the ʿUthmāniyya'; Nagel, *Rechtleitung und Kalifat*, 414–24; Crone, *Political Thought*, 93.
26. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 93–5.
27. Kimber, 'Al-Maʾmūn and Baghdad'.
28. Ibn al-Jawzī, MS Paris ar. 5903, fos 149a–151a (cited in Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 137); Qal., ix, 362–6 (edited in Ṣaf., iii, 340–3); al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, xlix, 148–52.
29. Ibn al-Jawzī, MS Paris ar. 5903, fo. 151a–b, cited in Gabrieli, *Al-Maʾmūn*, 44; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, xlix, 152–3.
30. Gabrieli, *Al-Maʾmūn*, 38–45.
31. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 133–9.
32. Gabrieli, *Al-Maʾmūn*, 38, 44–5; Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 116, 133.
33. *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ibn al-Djawzī, Shams al-Dīn Abu 'l-Muẓaffar Yūsuf b. Kizoghlu, known as Sibṭ' (C. Cahen).
34. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 133. It is also possible that he is referring to the *ʿIqd al-Jumān*, by his contemporary, al-ʿAynī (d. 1451), but, if so, it is not an earlier source.
35. Qal., ix, 365; Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 138.
36. Qal., ix, 364, 365; tr. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 137, 137–8.
37. Wakin, *Function*, 47–9.
38. The public letters proclaiming his innocence of the succession plan having failed to protect him; see Madelung, 'New documents'.
39. Cf. al-Mahdī's entry into Baghdad in 768; see above, p. 201, and Ch. 10, n. 57.
40. Ṭab., iii, 1036–7. It seems to have been a standard staging post for the caliphal approach to Baghdad: Ṭab., iii, 730.
41. Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, *Kitāb Baghdād*, 9; cf. Ṭab., iii, 1036–7. Cf. al-Mahdī's formal reception on his arrival at Baghdad in 768; see above, p. 201, and Ch. 10, n. 57.
42. On the date, see al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 95, n. 293 (C. E. Bosworth).
43. Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, *Kitāb Baghdād*, 10; cf. Ṭab., iii, 1037.
44. Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, *Kitāb Baghdād*, 10; cf. Ṭab., iii, 1038. Yaq., ii, 551, makes much less of the change in livery.
45. Kennedy, *Armies*, 118.
46. Ṭab., iii, 1133–41.
47. Ṭab., iii, 1164.
48. Ṭab., iii, 1164. Cf. Yaq., ii, 575, where he also appoints a new governor of the Jazīra and its Byzantine frontier.
49. Din., 396.
50. Ṭab., iii, 1102–3, 1112–13.
51. Ṭab., iii, 1267; cf. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 133, n. 369 (C. E. Bosworth).
52. Yaq., ii, 574, 584. Khal., 475, passes over the succession in one sentence.
53. Yaq., ii, 361, 491.
54. Cf. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi's usage, discussed in Meouak, *Pouvoir*, 23.
55. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 1, n. 2 (C. E. Bosworth); Kennedy, 'Caliphs and their chroniclers', 19.

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56. Ṭab., iii, 1249–50, 1256ff.; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, xv (C. E. Bosworth); Gordon, *Breaking*, 76–7.
57. The figure is given in *ʿUyūn*, 398.
58. i.e. from Samarqand in Transoxiana; on his origins, see al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 113, n. 315 (C. E. Bosworth).
59. His origins are obscure. He first appears in al-Afshīn's entourage in 835: Ṭab., iii, 1188, 1204, 1211, *et al.*
60. A Khurasani of Arabian heritage: al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 7, n. 22 (C. E. Bosworth).
61. Possibly a Sistani noble: al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 130, n. 356 (C. E. Bosworth).
62. i.e. from Farghāna in Transoxiana; see al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 49, n. 159 (C. E. Bosworth).
63. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 133, n. 369 (C. E. Bosworth).
64. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 132, n. 367 (C. E. Bosworth).
65. The division is not clearly one between 'Turks' and 'Iranians': there were Turks among al-Maʾmūn's and al-ʿAbbās' supporters, and Iranian nobles, notably al-Afshīn, among al-Muʿtaṣim's following. Nonetheless, al-Muʿtaṣim's recruitment of a 'private guard' of predominantly Turkish slave-soldiers was crucial: al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 133, n. 371 (C. E. Bosworth); Gordon, *Breaking*, 15–78.
66. Yaq., ii, 585; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 178, n. 504 (C. E. Bosworth); Gordon, *Breaking*, 77, 79, 112.
67. Ṭab., iii, 1302.
68. Ṭab., iii, 1233; Mas., v, §2809, §2815 (= vii, 126–7, 132–3); Sourdel, 'Questions de cérémonial', 143–4; Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 68.
69. Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 68, citing Ibn al-Zubayr, *al-Dhakhāʾir*, 169, §160.
70. Ṭab., iii, 1318–19.
71. See below, p. 279.
72. Ṭab., iii, 1179–80.
73. Kennedy, *Prophet*, 153.
74. Northedge, *Samarra*, 97ff., 132–48.
75. Cf. Ṭab., iii, 1647, 1657, 1687; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 295, and n. 6, 677.
76. Robinson, 'Introduction', 17; Northedge, *Samarra*, 152ff.
77. See, e.g., below, pp. 276–7.
78. Robinson, 'Introduction', 17; Northedge, *Samarra*, 100ff.
79. Khal., 478; Ṭab., iii, 1329.
80. See above, p. 267.
81. Yaq., ii, 584–5.
82. Ṭab., iii, 1302, 1330; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiii, 176, n. 497.
83. al-Suyūṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-khulafāʾ*, 400; Gordon, *Breaking*, 79.
84. Northedge, *Samarra*, 225–7.

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CHAPTER

14

THE CALIPHATE OF AL-MUTAWAKKIL (847–861)

Al-Yaᶜqūbī describes the accession of al-Mutawakkil on the day of al-Wāthiq's death (Wednesday 10 August 847):

> The pledge of allegiance was taken to Jaᶜfar b. al-Muᶜtaṣim . . . the first who pledged allegiance to him were Sīmā the Turk, known as al-Dimashqī, and Waṣīf the Turk. He (al-Mutawakkil) immediately rode to the Public Audience Hall (Dār al-ᶜĀmma), and ordered the giving of eight months pay to the army (*al-jund*). In total, the sons of seven caliphs greeted him (*sallama ᶜalayhi*): Manṣūr b. al-Mahdī; al-ᶜAbbās b. al-Hādī; Aḥmad b. al-Rashīd; ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-Amīn; Mūsā b. al-Maᵓmūn and his brothers; Aḥmad b. al-Muᶜtaṣim and his brothers; Muḥammad b. al-Wāthiq.[1]

Al-Ṭabarī cites three main accounts without citing his sources.[2] None mentions the 'sons of seven caliphs'. However, the third corroborates al-Yaᶜqūbī, in stating that 'the senior courtiers' pledge of allegiance (*bayᶜat al-khāṣṣa*) was taken to al-Mutawakkil at the hour of al-Wāthiq's death and the public pledge (*bayᶜat al-ᶜāmma*) when the sun set on the same day'.

Al-Ṭabarī's first account is quite different in that it makes much more of the selection of al-Mutawakkil by the administrators and Turkish commanders. He places six of them at the death of al-Wāthiq in his Hārūnī palace: Aḥmad b. Abī Dāwūd, the chief *qāḍī*, Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Malik al-Zayyāt, the *ṣāḥib dīwān al-rasāᵓil*, ᶜUmar b. Faraj al-Rukhkhajī, the senior scribe, the future vizier Aḥmad b. Khālid Abū al-Wazīr and two Turkish commanders, Ītākh and Waṣīf (but not Sīmā,[3] who is mentioned by al-Yaᶜqūbī). Having rejected al-Wāthiq's son as a possible successor on account of his youth, the clique fixed upon al-Wāthiq's

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brother Jaᶜfar, dressed him in the caliphal *qalansuwa* and turban and then proceeded to the Public Audience Hall ('Dār al-ᶜĀmma'). There al-Mutawakkil received the oath of allegiance, which had been composed by Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Malik al-Zayyāt (*wa-kāna allādhī kataba al-bayᶜa lahu*). (Elsewhere, al-Ṭabarī notes that the same Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Malik al-Zayyāt had initially favoured the nomination of al-Wāthiq's son Muḥammad.[4]) The caliphal title al-Mutawakkil bi'llāh was chosen by the same clique only after the pledge of allegiance had been taken; Ibn al-Zayyāt presided over the announcement of this, too.

This first report mentions advanced payments of eight months' pay that were given to the regular army (*al-jund*). Al-Ṭabarī's second report notes different advanced payments for different parts of the army: the 'Turks' were to receive four months' pay, 'the regular army (*jund*), the Shākiriyya and Hāshimites of similar rank', were to receive eight months and 'the Maghāriba' three months (or possibly 'the Shākiriyya and the Maghāriba three months'). After some negotiation of these payments, the troops acquiesced to the accession. The differentials between the payments appear to be inversely proportional to the loyalty of the troops to the electing clique: the Transoxianan Shākiriyya and the Maghāriba clients of the Turks receive least, the old guard of Arab–Iranian regulars and the Banū Hāshim receive most.[5]

In both reports, the clique control every aspect of the accession, from the choice of the caliph to the terms of the oath of allegiance to him; the detail that it is Aḥmad b. Khālid Abū al-Wazīr who invests the future al-Mutawakkil with the caliphal garments is an unusual 'behind the scenes' insight that almost seems to imply that the accession amounted to a coronation by the vizier; the hasty naming of the caliph also contributes to the implication that al-Mutawakkil was installed as a puppet caliph. However, despite their polemical quality, al-Ṭabarī's reports probably do reflect the division of power at the Abbasid court in 847. That all but Waṣīf had died or fallen from grace by 850 suggests that al-Yaᶜqūbī's account is a later, 'official version' of the accession, in which the defeated members of the clique have been ignored in favour of Sīmā and Waṣīf, who both survived the purges of 847–50; the emphasis on Abbasid legitimacy also suggests this. However, beyond this reshaping, the coincidences between al-Ṭabarī's account and al-Yaᶜqūbī's suggest that they do reflect the forms of the ceremonies. What is perhaps most striking about all the accounts is the complete absence of any mention of a mosque: all the ritual takes place in the palace. This is corroborated by the design of the Dār al-Khilāfa, which stood quite separately from the large congregational mosques of the city (in marked distinction to the mosque–palace complexes of Madīnat al-Salām and Marw). The metropolitan pledge of allegiance at Samarra appears to have been a purely aulic ritual.

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THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE *WILĀYAT AL-ʿAHD*

The first years of al-Mutawakkil's caliphate witnessed the demise of all but Waṣīf and Sīmā among the clique that had brought him to power. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Zayyāt was betrayed and killed in 847; in 848 Aḥmad b. Khālid fell from favour and ʿUmar b. Faraj was handed over to Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Muṣʿab, a rival, Ṭāhirid, courtier from Baghdad; Aḥmad b. Abī Dāwūd conveniently died of what appear to have been natural causes. In 849 the Turkish commander Ītākh was also deposed by Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm, to the benefit of Waṣīf, to whom many of Ītākh's powers were transferred; Ītākh died in prison in December 849. A few months after Ītākh's elimination, the caretaker vizier who had replaced Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Zayyāt was himself replaced by ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān, a son of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl's secretary.[6]

This dramatic shift in power at the caliphal court was marked by what was probably the first nomination of an Abbasid *walī al-ʿahd* for forty-five years.[7] The revival of the *wilāyat al-ʿahd* appears to be linked to the fortunes of the new vizier, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān, who presided over the only nominations of *wulāt al-ʿuhūd* at Samarra, under al-Mutawakkil and then under his son al-Muʿtamid. The elimination of many of the old scribal elite had occurred at the end of April 849, just days after the public appointment, on the 19 April, of al-Mutawakkil's son al-Muntaṣir to authority over the Ḥijāz and Yemen.[8] Then, on 11 or 12 July 850, al-Mutawakkil appointed two more sons as successors and made them governors over the central and western provinces, including the *thughūr*, and over Iran and Bilād al-Shām, respectively.

ʿUbayd Allāh and his allies deployed all the resources of the caliphal court to proclaim the new succession arrangements. Al-Iṣfahānī describes the ceremonies of 11 or 12 July 850. Al-Mutawakkil progressed from the Dār al-Khilāfa in central Samarra to the palace of the Bride (Qaṣr al-ʿArūs), which lay 13 kilometres south, on the other side of the Tigris.[9] Ibrāhīm b. al-ʿAbbās al-Ṣūlī, a leading member of the new ruling elite as head of both the caliphal chancery and the bureau of expenditure (*dīwān al-rasāʾil* and *dīwān al-nafaqāt*), plays a prominent role in the account:[10]

> Ḥanẓala informed me, saying, Maymūn b. Hārūn reported to me, saying: When al-Mutawakkil made the contract for the possessors of the covenants (*ʿaqada li-wulāt al-ʿuhūd*) among his sons, he rode through Samarra in a processsion (*rakiba bi-Surra man raʾā rakhbatan*), finer than which had not been seen. The possessors of the covenants and the Turks rode before him, and their sons walked in front of al-Mutawakkil wearing belts of gold; in their hands were battle axes embellished with gold (*bi-manāṭiq al-dhahab fī aydīhim al-ṭabrzīnāt al-muḥallāt*

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bi'l-dhahab). He dismounted at the water and held audience upon it, with the troops in attendance, in *al-jawānaḥiyyāt* and other kinds of boats. He progressed until he disembarked at the palace called al-ᶜArūs ('the Bride'). He gave permission to the people and they entered into his presence. After they had spoken before him, Ibrāhīm b. al-ᶜAbbās came forward from the ranks and asked permission to recite. (Al-Mutawakkil) granted him permission, and he said:

When Jaᶜfar (al-Mutawakkil) appeared on Thursday at al-Muṭall and at al-ᶜArūs ('the High Place' and 'the Bride')
He appeared at both places clothed in raiments which outshone ill-omened stars.
And, when he appeared among his beloved possessors of the covenant and those of great honour,
He became as a moon among its satellites and a sun crowned with suns (*shamsan mukallalatan bi'l-shumūs*),
(Capable of) lighting fire and extinguishing it, in order to bring a day of joy and end a day of gloom.

Then (Ibrāhīm) approached the possessors of the covenant and said:

The bonds of Islam, upon which depend victory, power and support (*al-naṣr wa'l-iᶜzāz wa'l-taᵓyīd*),[11] have been made manifest
In a caliph from Hāshim and three of the possessors of the covenant who protect the caliphate;
A moon around which satellites turn, encompassing the ascendency of his good fortune with (their) good fortune.[12]
The days have raised them up and they are raised up by him;[13] they are distinguished by their most honourable souls and noble ancestry.

(Maymūn) said: al-Mutawakkil ordered that Ibrāhīm be given 100,000 dirhams and the heirs apparent ordered the same.[14]

Al-Yaᶜqūbī's typically terse account makes no mention of the procession, but notes that gifts were distributed and ten months' pay given to the army (*al-jund*) and that the *khaṭīb*s were ordered to promulgate the nomination in their *khuṭba*s.[15] Al-Ṭabarī does not describe the ceremonial procession either, but refers instead to the ritual of investiture itself.[16] This appears to have resembled that of a governor or other caliphal agent: al-Mutawakkil is said to have 'tied two banners (*liwāᵓayn*) for each of them, one black, which was the banner of the covenant, and the other white, which was the banner of the provincial office (*ᶜamal*)'.[17] Each

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son was assigned responsibility for a region of the caliphate. The written nomination of the three heirs was publicly witnessed (following al-Iṣfahānī, either at the Dār al-Khilāfa, or at al-ᶜArūs). The witnesses were members of al-Mutawakkil's 'family, followers, army commanders, judges, trustworthy agents, lawyers, and others from among the Muslims' (*min ahl baytihi wa-shīᶜatihi wa-quwwādihi wa-quḍātihi wa-kufātihi wa-fuqahāᵓihi wa-ghayrihi min al-muslimīn*). The document is said to have been 'written out in four copies, with the attestation of witnesses written out in the presence of the Commander of the Faithful on each copy' (*wa-qad kutiba hādhā al-kitāb arbaᶜ nusakh wuqiᶜat shahādatu al-shuhūd bi-ḥaḍrat amīr al-muᵓminīn fī kull nuskha minhā*).[18]

The text is particularly notable for its assertion of caliphal authority over the succession.[19] Unlike the letter of al-Maᵓmūn to Medina about the nomination of ᶜAlī al-Riḍā, it does not go to great lengths to assert the right of the caliph to choose his successors. It simply states his capacity to make a legal contract ('sound mind and body') and then stipulates (*jaᶜala*, in two of the manuscripts) the sequence of the succession among his three sons. This may also account for the absence of the 'oaths of the *bayᶜa*', which are present only in a very vestigial form;[20] the caliph's witnessed covenant has determined the succession, and all the Muslims are obliged to respect the contract. This interpretation of the law of succession anticipates the 'classical' interpretation of the caliph's right to nominate his successor by covenant (*ᶜahd*), which is found in much later Sunni treatises on the subject.[21]

It is likely that the text does reflect the document drawn up in July 850. As with many such copies of documents in the literary sources, the break between the end of the document and the beginning of the framing material is not clear. The most recent English translator includes this description of the four copies of the document (one each for the *khizāna*s of caliph and his three successors) in the text.[22] However, this might be a description related to the document, or a summary of a codicil to it, rather than part of the document itself.[23] The opening *basmala* is also missing.[24] However, al-Ṭabarī was the tutor of ᶜUbayd Allāh's son, and so would have had access to the text. Although the sequence of its structure deviates somewhat from that of earlier documents, all the formal elements one would expect are there.[25] Some of its language echoes the letters composed for the succession of ᶜAlī al-Riḍā, as does the omission of the oaths of the *bayᶜa*.[26] These documents were composed under the Sahlids, who had employed ᶜUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān's father. ᶜUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān, and the *ṣāḥib dīwān al-rasāᵓil* and *ṣāḥib dīwān al-nafaqāt*, Ibrāhīm b. al-ᶜAbbās al-Ṣūlī, appear to have presided over a conscious effort to revive the custom of using a written covenant to manage the succession, for which the use of dispositive documents had been well established.

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The division of the caliphate between three *wulāt al-ʿuhūd* appears to have been in conscious imitation of Hārūn al-Rashīd's bipartite succession settlement made during the *ḥajj* at Mecca in 802 and his tripartite division that followed it in 805. The use of the *ḥajj* was another aspect of Abbasid ritual revived under al-Mutawakkil. Since 803 the pilgrimage, which was linked to governorship of Mecca and Medina, had usually been given to cadet branches of the Abbasid family (and on two occasions they had been accompanied by senior Turkish commanders).[27] However, al-Muntaṣir, al-Mutawakkil's first heir, was made governor of the Ḥijāz and Yemen in 848 and, in the year following the nomination of the *wulāt al-ʿuhūd*, al-Muntaṣir led the *ḥajj*, together with the caliph's mother, Shujaʿ (a role for the matriarch of the caliphal family that recalled that of Qarāṭīs, mother of al-Wāthiq, and Zubayda, mother of al-Amīn).[28]

The development of Samarra and the foundation of al-Mutawakkiliyya

Al-Mutawakkil's reign marks the second, most extensive phase of building at Samarra.[29] After the nomination of his heirs, al-Mutawakkil assigned existing palaces to two of his sons (al-Muntaṣir was given al-Jawsaq, adjacent to the Dār al-Khilāfa; al-Muʾayyad resided at the former palace of the commander al-Afshīn) and built a third at Balkuwārā, south of the main city, for al-Muʿtazz. Then, nine years later, in 859, al-Mutawakkil founded an entirely new palace-city, variously referred to as al-Maḥūza, al-Jaʿfariyya or al-Mutawakkiliyya. It was located some 20 kilometres to the north of Samarra and was centred on the new Jaʿfarī caliphal palace. (The fired-brick Abū Dulaf mosque, with its huge spiral minaret, is the most prominent modern remnant of this extensive phase of building.) The court moved to al-Mutawakkiliyya in 860.[30]

Recent discussions of building at Samarra have noted that both design and construction materials kept unit costs low and that there may well have been an element of land speculation by the new elite in the development of their city.[31] Nonetheless, building work on this scale in each generation (and, in the case of al-Mutawakkil, many times in one generation) must have been enormously costly. The sources corroborate this, stating costs of hundreds of millions of dirhams, which is a substantial proportion of the income from taxation, even allowing for inflation of the figures (albeit less than the cost of paying the army that inhabited the surrounding garrisons).[32] In retrospect, the expenditure might seem irrational, but, when al-Mutawakkil built his new city, at a purported cost of 50,000,000 dirhams, he no doubt intended the new foundation to mark a successful break from the domination of the Turkish commanders that had marred the previous generation.[33] It was a foundation in the tradition of al-Muʿtaṣim's

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establishment of Samarra in 836, Hārūn al-Rashīd's move to al-Raqqa/al-Rāfiqa in 796 or al-Manṣūr's foundation of Madīnat al-Salām itself in 762. The palaces were in the Near Eastern tradition of the public expression of royal wealth and power through monumental building.[34]

Factional conflict and the assassination of al-Mutawakkil

If, as with previous new palace-cities, the construction of al-Mutawakkiliyya was part of an attempt to break with a dominant military elite, it was inauspicious that al-Mutawakkil settled on a site only 20 kilometres away.[35] The lack of ambition implies a stalemate between factions. Through the division of the caliphate among the nominated successors, the vizier, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Khāqān, and the caliph's closest adviser, al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān, would have been able to cultivate their connections with other companies of troops besides the Turks – Arabs, Iranians and Transoxianans. They may also have been seeking an alliance with the governor of Baghdad, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh the Ṭāhirid.[36] The loyalty of these allies could be retained through their anticipation of the future accession of the heir who would reward them with access to the resources of the caliphate – either al-Muʿtazz or al-Muʾayyad. However, as in the eighth and early ninth centuries, the restoration of the *wilāyat al-ʿahd* had also revived the dynamic of factional conflict over the succession, albeit in the rather different context of the mid-ninth-century empire, where factions formed within the centralised cavalry army in Iraq.

On the night of 10 December, or the early hours of 11 December 861, a group of Turkish commanders assassinated al-Mutawakkil and al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān, taking advantage of the customary inebriation with which the evening sitting of the court ended.[37] The killing of the caliph came less than twelve months after the move to al-Mutawakkiliyya. The regicide was the prelude to an an unusual coup, in which al-Mutawakkil's nominated first successor, al-Muntaṣir, was immediately installed as caliph by the assassins. The confiscation of Turkish estates is said to have actually triggered the assassination,[38] but the long-term rise of ʿUbyad Allāh, al-Fatḥ and their non-Turkish military allies was the underlying cause of the coup. On the morning after the assassination, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Khāqān is said to have been approached by al-Muʿtazz's 'companions' (*ṣaḥāba*). However, he ordered restraint, saying, 'our man is in their hands', meaning al-Muʿtazz. Among the 'companions' were 'the Abnāʾ, Persians, Armenians, thugs, Arab tribesmen from Syria and the Jazīra, brigands and others'; many of these groups reappear as supporters of al-Muʿtazz and allies of the Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh in the following months.[39]

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NOTES

1. Yaq., ii, 591.
2. Ṭab., iii, 1367–70.
3. On Sīmā, see Gordon, *Breaking*, 17, and n. 14, 23.
4. Ṭab., iii, 1372–3.
5. See above, p. 260, and Ch. 13, n. 6.
6. On whom, see Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 273, n. 3, 274ff.
7. As we have seen (above, pp. 265–7), al-Muᶜtaṣim is said to have been named as his heir by al-Maᵓmūn on his deathbed; al-ᶜAbbās appears to have had a strong claim to the succession, but may not have been formally nominated as *walī al-ᶜahd*.
8. Ṭab., iii, 1379.
9. On al-ᶜArūs/Iṣṭablāt, see Northedge, *Samarra*, 200–4.
10. Ṭab., iii, 1394–403; on al-Ṣūlī, a scribe from a family of Jurjānī origin, see Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 274, ii, 734.
11. The word-play is with the titles of the heirs: al-Muntaṣir ('The One Made Victorious'), al-Muᶜtazz ('The One Made Great') and al-Muᵓayyad ('The One Supported').
12. This third verse is omitted in some other versions: al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiv, 104, n. 337 (J. L. Kraemer).
13. Ṭab., iii, 1402, has: 'The forefathers protect them and are protected by them.'
14. *Agh.*, ix, 32. Cf. Northedge, 'An interpretation', 145.
15. Yaq., ii, 595.
16. Although he does cite one of the two panegyrics.
17. Ṭab., iii, 1395.
18. Ṭab., iii, 1396, 1402.
19. Ṭab., iii, 1396–402.
20. Ṭab., iii, 1401–2.
21. See below, pp. 309–11.
22. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiv, 103 (J. L. Kraemer).
23. Chejne, *Succession*, 128, also includes a further paragraph, describing the appointment of al-Muntaṣir to his provincial governorship and his responsibilities to his brothers.
24. Ṭab., iii, 1396.
25. On this structure, see above, p. 231.
26. Notably the opening formula, *hādhā kitāb katabahu* . . . (Ṭab., iii, 1396; cf. Qal., ix, 362) and the citation of Q 33.15 (Ṭab., iii, 1401; cf. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, xlix, 152) and the absence of 'oaths of the *bayᶜa*' (Ṭab., iii, 1401–2; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, xlix, 153, where the reference to *nakāl* perhaps implies the oaths).
27. See the end-of-year entries in Ṭab. and Khal. The only exceptions are the years 816, when the brother of al-Maᵓmūn, the future caliph al-Muᶜtaṣim, led the *ḥajj* (Khal., 470; Ṭab., iii, 1001) and 842, when the brother of the caliph al-Wāthiq, the future al-Mutawakkil, led it, with al-Wāthiq's mother, Qarāṭīs (Khal., 478; Ṭab., iii, 1330). For Turkish commanders at the rituals, see above, p. 268, and Ṭab., iii, 1318–19 (Ashināṣ, in 841); Ṭab., iii, 1383–4 (Ītākh, in 849).
28. Yaq., ii, 595, places this in the same year as his nomination, which cannot be correct, since the ritual at Samarra took place during Dhū al-Ḥijja; Ṭab., iii, 1408, places it in June 851.
29. Northedge, *Samarra*, 99–100, 122ff.

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30. Northedge, 'The palaces', 49–58; Northedge, *Samarra*, 211ff.
31. Rogers, 'Sāmarrā', 136–7; Kennedy, *Prophet*, 163; Milwright, 'Fixtures and fittings', 83ff.
32. Robinson, 'Introduction', 11–13; Northedge, 'The palaces', 49; Milwright, 'Fixtures and fittings'; Kennedy, *Armies*, 139.
33. For the cost, see Rogers, 'Sāmarrā', 133ff.; Northedge, 'The palaces', 49.
34. Cf. Rogers, 'Sāmarrā', 120, 137–8, 154; Robinson, 'Introduction', 16–17.
35. Gordon, *Breaking*, 87–8. Cf. Cobb, 'Al-Mutawakkil's Damascus'.
36. He was appointed in 851–2: al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxv, 3, n. 11. Cf. Gordon, *Breaking*, 91.
37. The precise composition of the group is not clear: Gordon, *Breaking*, 89–90.
38. Gordon, *Breaking*, 88–9.
39. See below, p. 290.

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CHAPTER

15

THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND NINTH-CENTURY CIVIL WAR (861–865)

THE ACCESSION OF AL-MUNTAṢIR (R. 11 DECEMBER 861 – 7 JUNE 862)

On the assassination of al-Mutawakkil, al-Muntaṣir's entourage was swift to assert his right to the caliphate and to secure the pledges of the leading notables at Samarra and al-Mutawakkiliyya. Once again, al-Yaʿqūbī provides a concise account, and al-Ṭabarī a much fuller one.

According to al-Yaʿqūbī:

> The pledge of allegiance was taken to Muḥammad al-Muntaṣir b. Jaʿfar al-Mutawakkil . . . on the night on which his father was killed, which was 4 Shawwāl 247 (11 December 861) . . . He summoned his two brothers ʿAbd Allāh al-Muʿtazz bi'llāh[1] and Ibrāhīm al-Muʾayyad. He took the pledge of allegiance from them, and from all of the courtiers who were present, rode to the Public Audience Hall (Dār al-ʿĀmma), and gave the army (*al-jund*) 10 months' stipends and returned from al-Jaʿfariyya to Samarra, ordering the destruction of those palaces and the transfer of the courtiers from them.[2]

Al-Ṭabarī's account of events is composed of six reports; two are anonymous and four are on the authority of various courtiers. As one might expect of reports of a coup, they are slightly contradictory. However, despite what appear to be attempts to conceal motives or the extent of involvement, they do present a coherent picture of events, which accords with al-Yaʿqūbī's summary and which can be mapped onto the plan of the imperial capital. Five reports are narratives; a sixth (in fifth place in al-Ṭabarī's sequence) is a copy of document.

The first account, on the authority of Zurqān, deputy of Zurāfa, the chamberlain

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of al-Mutawakkil, says that al-Mutawakkil's assassins 'went out to al-Muntaṣir and greeted him as caliph' (*kharaja . . . ilā al-Muntaṣir wa-sallamū ʿalayhi bi'l-khilāfa*) and then compelled his master, Zurāfa, to give the pledge of allegiance. Then they summoned the main Turkish commander, Waṣīf, and his companions (*aṣḥāb*) and persuaded them to pledge allegiance.[3]

A second account, on the authority of one of the conspirators themselves, reports the events of the following morning (Wednesday 11 December 861):

> When it was the morning of the Wednesday, the courtiers were in attendance at the Jaʿfariyya (al-Mutawakkil's palace) – the army commanders, the scribes, the notables, the Shākiriyya, the army and others. Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb read them a document which included the report from the Commander of the Faithful al-Muntaṣir that al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān had killed his father Jaʿfar al-Mutawakkil and then been killed by him. The people pledged allegiance; ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān was present, and pledged allegiance and then departed.[4]

The singling-out of ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān in this narrative appears to reflect his importance as an ally of al-Muʿtazz and a rival to the conspirators.

A third report places al-Muntaṣir far outside the Jaʿfarī palace. This might be taken to contradict Zurāfa's account, which seems to place al-Muntaṣir nearer to the assassination.[5] It derives from Abū ʿUthmān Saʿīd the Younger, a courtier of al-Wāthiq, al-Mutawakkil and al-Muntaṣir. Saʿīd the Younger claims to have been with al-Muntaṣir and his entourage on the night of the assassination but to have been naive of the plot. This report by a member of al-Muntaṣir's intimate entourage appears to be an attempt to justify his actions and to conceal any preparation prior to the death of al-Mutawakkil. However, in al-Ṭabarī's narrative they almost function as accusations of guilt, so unlikely is the story.

Having left the evening *majlis* at the Jaʿfarī palace in al-Mutawakkiliyya on the night of 10 December, Saʿīd implies that they set out for al-Muntaṣir's residence, which was the original Samarran Dār al-Khilāfa, some 20 kilometres to the south.[6] They had only reached al-Ḥayr – either a hunting-ground *en route*, or perhaps one of the outlying roads – when the news of al-Mutawakkil's death arrived.[7] An outdoor *majlis* was immediately convened by al-Muntaṣir's tutor, Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb al-Jarjarāʾī, and his scribe, Saʿīd b. Ḥumayd, and the pledge of allegiance was given to al-Muntaṣir. (Interpolated into Saʿīd the Younger's account at this point is a report from Saʿīd b. Ḥumayd himself, who recalls his master asking him to draw up an impromptu (!) oath of allegiance to the new caliph.[8]) Saʿīd the Younger set out for the palace of al-Muʿtazz at Balkuwārā, some 10 kilometres south of the Samarran Dār al-Khilāfa,[9] and then went north with al-Muʿtazz to pledge allegiance to al-Muntaṣir at his palace; al-Muʾayyad

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arrived there soon after, and then they all departed at dawn for the Jaᶜfarī palace to bury al-Mutawakkil.

Al-Ṭabarī's fifth account is 'a copy of the pledge of allegiance which was taken to al-Muntaṣir' (*nuskha al-bayᶜa allatī ukhidat li'l-Muntaṣir*). This is the first copy of a document said to have been prepared for the ceremony of the oath of allegiance to a caliph. (Though it cannot by any means have been the first such document: Ibn al-Zayyāt is said to have prepared just such a text at al-Mutawakkil's accession in 847 and, as we have seen, there are numerous references to the use of written documents in promulgating the accession in the early Abbasid period and even the Marwanid period.[10]) The document is translated in Chapter 16 below. From its position after the accounts of the two Saᶜīds, it appears to be the pledge taken on the morning of the 11 December, which had been drawn up by Saᶜīd b. Ḥumayd. However, one manuscript inserts: 'In this year al-Muᶜtazz and al-Muʾayyad abdicated and (al-Muntaṣir) made their abdication public in the new Jaᶜfarī palace.' The scribe of this manuscript of al-Ṭabarī's *History* may have assumed, on seeing that the document makes no mention of the rights of al-Muntaṣir's brothers, that the document in fact belonged to a time after they had both abdicated (as they in fact did a few months later, in the spring of 862). It is perhaps more likely that al-Muntaṣir's entourage was in a position to ignore some of the rights of his brothers from the outset; after all, they were both imprisoned soon after al-Muntaṣir's accession, and then formally deposed from the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd*.[11]

Although al-Ṭabarī cites the document without any indication of how exactly it was used, its features suggest that it would have been read aloud to the assemblies of notables (*wujūh*) that gathered at first at the Public Audience Hall at the Dār al-Khilāfa, and then at the Jaᶜfarī palace. It is in the second person, beginning, 'You pledge allegiance to . . .' (*tubāyiᶜūna*) and then setting out the obligation of obedience to al-Muntaṣir in both thought and deed, under God's covenant and the oaths of the *bayᶜa*. Disobedience to the caliph, it is stated, amounts to ceasing to be a Muslim. It is a long, elaborate text, in the tradition of prose for public speech. It would have taken some minutes to read out and would have gained its rhetorical effect from an iterative language, the details of which one imagines might have been hard to follow, but the force of which – religious, political and military loyalty and obedience – was made clear through repetition and the invocation of pertinent quranic texts.[12] For the non-Arabic-speaking members of the audience – of whom one imagines there might have been quite a few – the sacred status of the quranic Arabic would have conveyed the solemnity of the agreement.

Al-Ṭabarī's sixth and final report – without *isnād* – describes the reaction of some of the other troops to the Turkish coup. There was unrest in Samarra and at al-Mutawakkiliyya. At al-Mutawakkiliyya, 'the regular army (*jund*) and the

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Shākiriyya troops, massed at the Public Gate (Bāb al-ᶜĀmma) of the Jaᶜfarī palace, and others from the mob and the general populace . . . were riding about . . . discussing the matter of the pledge of allegiance (*amr al-bayᶜa*)'. Some were crushed when the Maghāriba troops were sent against them.[13] The implication is that the unruly groups were loyal to the dead caliph, and to his second heir, while the Maghāriba (probably former Arab prisoners loyal to the Turks) enforced the will of al-Muntaṣir and his Turkish supporters.[14] The regular army were predominantly Arab and Iranian, the Shākiriyya were most likely Transoxianan; they may have been a personal guard that had been recruited (or expanded) by al-Mutawakkil.[15] The unrest might also further support the idea, suggested above, that the pledge of allegiance was in fact taken *only* to al-Muntaṣir, and not to his brothers, as the document suggests. Again, there is no mention of assemblies at the mosques.

THE DEPOSITION OF AL-MUᶜTAZZ AND AL-MUᵓAYYAD

Al-Muᶜtazz and al-Muᵓayyad were placed under house arrest within '40 days' of the accession of their older brother and were compelled to abdicate their claim to the caliphate in a public ritual at the Jaᶜfarī palace in al-Mutawakiliyya.[16] The public promulgation of this took place in April 862 (about 120 days after al-Muntaṣir's accession).[17] The form of the ceremony of *khalᶜ* recalled its precedents in 764 and 776 (and, very likely, those in 786 and 833). However, as with Samarran ceremonies of accession, it took place not in the congregational mosque (or the palace and then the mosque), but in the audience halls of the caliphal palace (*dār al-khāṣṣa wa'l-ᶜāmma*). Al-Ṭabarī presents two accounts of the abdication. The first is al-Muᵓayyad's own account, on the authority of his tutor, Abū Yūsuf Yaᶜqūb b. al-Sikkīt.[18] It is sympathetic to al-Muᵓayyad and places the blame for the deposition on the Turks, not al-Muntaṣir: al-Muᵓayyad sensibly complies with the Turks' request that they abdicate (his brother al-Muᶜtazz, who ended badly,[19] resisted); al-Muntaṣir makes an outburst against the Turks' domination of the caliphate at the abdication ceremony itself. The second account, introduced with 'it is said' (*qīla*), is more neutral in tone, and perhaps derives from an official source.[20] It includes purported copies of the documents for the abdication.

Both accounts agree on the form of the ritual. The two brothers were compelled to write out their own declarations of their abdication. They then proceeded to the audience hall, which was arranged for a formal *majlis*, 'with the people (*al-nās*) arranged in their ranks (*marātibihim*)'. The 'official' account lists the witnesses in more detail:

> The leading men (*ruᵓūs al-nās*), the Turks, the notables (*wujūh*), companions (*ṣaḥāba*), judges (*quḍāt*), the chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*), Jaᶜfar b. ᶜAbd

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> al-Wāḥid, the commanders (*quwwād*), the Hashimites, the officials of the offices of government (*wulāt al-dawāwīn*), the partisans (*al-shīᶜa*), the senior members of the guard (*wujūh al-ḥaras*), Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, Waṣīf, Bughā the Elder, Bughā the Younger, and all those who were present in the Hall of the courtiers and the general populance (*dār al-khāṣṣa wa'l-ᶜāmma*).[21]

In al-Muᵓayyad's account, the brothers declared the letter of abdication to be theirs after the exchange of formal greetings, and a prompt from al-Muntaṣir. This was followed by al-Muntaṣir's outburst against the Turks. In the 'official' version there is no outburst. The brothers sat next to the caliph and his vizier, Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb, read out their short declarations, freeing from their obligations those bound to them by a pledge of allegiance. Each of the brothers then attested verbally to his letter of abdication. Al-Muntaṣir's only intervention was just prior to his withdrawal from the audience, when 'he said, "God has blessed (*qad khāra*) you both, and the Muslims'. The official account concludes with mention of the 'letters sent to the provincial officials about the deposition' (*kutuban ilā al-ᶜummāl bi-khalᶜ*), in Ṣafar 248 (6 April–4 May 862), and a copy of a letter given to Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, who had been present at the deposition ceremony. This letter confirmed him in his appointment as governor of Baghdad and released him and his followers from any obligation to al-Muᶜtazz.

Unlike the deposition document that precedes it, the letter to Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh appears to be intact and complete. It follows a structure familiar from other Abbasid texts composed for similar purposes – notably the 'letter of gift and stipulation' said to have been written for al-Faḍl b. Sahl by al-Maᵓmūn.[22] It includes three points of special interest regarding the deposition. First, it confirms the basis of al-Muᶜtazz's support:

> (They have released from the pledge of allegiance) those who were attached to them in their provinces from the commanders to the Commander of the Faithful, his clients, servants, regular army, Shākiriyya and all those with these commanders at court (*bi'l-ḥaḍra*) and in Khurasan.[23]

Second, it lists the public means by which the rights of the nominated heirs had been publicly proclaimed:

> The Commander of the Faithful has commanded the composition and dispatch (*inshāᵓ*) of the letters concerning this to all of the provincial officials, in order that: they will command that their content be taken into account in the provinces; they will depose (*yakhlaᶜū*) Abū ᶜAbd Allāh and Ibrāhīm from the succession (*wilāyat al-ᶜahd*), since they have both abdicated from it, and freed from it the

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> elite and the general populace, those present and those absent, those near and far; they will eliminate (*yusqiṭū*) mention of them regarding the succession (*bi-wilāyat al-ʿahd*) and mention of what is ascribed to it, including the titles of the succession covenant al-Muʿtazz bi'llāh and al-Muʾayyad bi'llāh, from their correspondence, their written formulas (*kutubihim wa-alfāẓihim*) and their invocation of them both from the pulpits; they will eliminate everything which was established in their official bureaus (*dawāwīn*) pertaining to their old and new edicts (*rusūmihim*) which applied to those who were attached to them both; they will end mention of them both on banners and pennants (*al-aʿlām wa-'l-maṭārid*), and what was marked the riding animals of the Shākiriyya and the frontier cavalry (*rābiṭa*).[24]

Finally, the fact of the letter's existence and its inclusion in al-Ṭabarī's narrative draw attention to doubt over Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's loyalty; Baghdad and Khurasan remained alternative sources of power to that of the Turkish commanders at the Samarran court.

THE ACCESSION OF AL-MUSTAʿĪN AND THE SAMARRAN ANARCHY

Having regained control of the caliphate through their puppet caliph, al-Muntaṣir, the Turkish commanders had the misfortune to see him die within six months of his accession, on 7 (or possibly 8) June 862. They immediately proclaimed al-Mustaʿīn, a grandson of al-Muʿtaṣim, to be the new caliph. However, the simmering tensions between the ruling Turkish commanders and the Arab and Iranian population of Samarra broke out into open conflict, and the ritual of the accession was disrupted by running battles between the Turkish commanders and the troops loyal to them and those who upheld the claims of al-Muʿtazz, who had been nominated by al-Mutawakkil as al-Muntaṣir's successor.[25] This opposition seems to have comprised a large opportunistic element, which exploited the conflict between the commanders to extract donative payments for their acquiesence.

Al-Ṭabarī introduces his account of these events as 'a report that is mentioned concerning the cause of his appointment and the time when the pledge of allegiance was taken to him'.[26] In fact, it appears to be three combined reports, which describe the Turks' decision to elect al-Mustaʿīn as caliph, the violence that broke out on the following day, when the public pledge of allegiance was demanded from the Samarrans, and then the efforts that were made to secure the support of Baghdad.

First, al-Ṭabarī says that the *mawālī* (here, the Turkish 'clients' of the caliphs) gathered on the day after al-Muntaṣir's death at the Hārūnī palace on the banks

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of the Tigris, where they swore to recognise the appointee of a conclave of al-Muntaṣir's vizier and some Turkish commanders.

> (They), and those who were with them, made the commanders of the Turks, the Maghāriba and the Ushrūsaniyya give their oaths (*istaḥlafū*) – the one who took the oaths from them was ᶜAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ᶜAbd al-Aᶜlā al-Iskāfī, the secretary of Bughā the Elder – that they would accept (*ᶜalā an yarḍaw*) whomever Bughā the Elder, Bughā the Younger and Utāmish were pleased with (*yarḍā bihi*). This was by the arrangement (*bi-tadbīr*) of Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb (former vizier of al-Muntaṣir). The group took the oath (*ḥalafa al-qawm*).
>
> They consulted among themselves (*tashāwarū baynahum*) and were loathe to appoint any of the sons of al-Mutawakkil to the caliphate, on account of their having killed their father and their fear that anyone (of them) whom they appointed to the caliphate would murder them. Then Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb and those of the *mawālī* who were present agreed upon Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Muᶜtaṣim, saying, 'The caliphate should not depart from the sons of our master (*mawlā*), al-Muᶜtaṣim' – before that, they had mentioned a number of the Hashimites.
>
> The pledge of allegiance was taken at the time of the second evening prayer (*al-ᶜishāᵓ al-ākhira*) on the night of Monday, 6 Rabīᶜ II (Sunday night, 8 June 862?) of that year (248/862). He was 28 years old. His patronym was Abū al-ᶜAbbās and he appointed Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb as his secretary and made Utāmish his vizier.[27]

Istaḥlafa implies that the oaths to agree to recognise the choice of the conclave was something other than a pledge of allegiance (*bayᶜa*), but rather a preliminary agreement taken from the commanders. The pledge of allegiance was then given to al-Mustaᶜīn either at the evening prayer on that night (Sunday), or on the following evening (Monday). (Because in Arabic days are sometimes counted from sunset and not sunrise, the date may in fact refer to the night of Sunday 8 June 862 and not to Monday 9 June.)

Al-Ṭabarī then continues with what appears to be a second report, 'and when it was Monday, 6 Rabīᶜ II (i.e. 9 June 862)'. This describes the violence that broke out during the ceremonies for the formal pledge of allegiance to al-Mustaᶜīn at the Dār al-Khilāfa.[28] The caliph and his Turkish entourage set out in procession from the Hārūnī palace, with the caliph dressed in caliphal garb (*al-ṭawīla wa-ziyy al-khilāfa*),[29] with the *ḥarba* being carried before him, heading east 'on the ᶜUmarī road between the gardens' to the 'public audience hall' (*Dār al-ᶜĀmma*), at al-Muᶜtaṣim's Dār al-Khilāfa. There, the entourage of an Ushrūsanī commander, Wājin, had formed a guard in two ranks at the triple 'Public Gate' (Bāb

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al-ᶜĀmma), which stood at the top of the steps that approached the palace from the west. Wājin and 'a number of the notables from his entourage stood in the line'. Inside the hall were 'high-ranking men' (*aṣḥāb al-marātib*) from 'the sons of al-Mutawakkil, the Abbasids, the Ṭalibids and others in possession of rank (*lahum martaba*)'.

After an hour and a half of the daylight (the distance between the two palaces is less than 3 kilometres), 'nearly 1000' cavalry from the Ṭabariyya, other troops (*akhlāṭ al-nās*) and the mob and market-traders, among them 50 Shākiriyya cavalry who 'were said to be from the enourage of Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāḥ' (the Ṭāhirid governor of Baghdad), appeared from 'the direction of the street and the markets'.[30] Drawing their weapons and shouting 'Victory to Muᶜtazz!' (*Muᶜtazz yā manṣūr!*), they charged the ranks outside the Bāb al-ᶜĀmma. The battle is said to have raged in the streets around the palace for an hour and a half. With the rebellion temporarily quelled, the Turks left for the Hārūnī palace, 'having given their pledge of allegiance to al-Mustaᶜīn'. The *mawālī* (the Turkish commanders) 'took the pledge of allegiance from those present at the Public Audience Hall, the Hashimites and other possessors of rank'.

However, the uprising broke out again that night, and this time the rabble overwhelmed some of the Ushrūsaniyya who were still in Samarra and looted the Dār al-Khilāfa and armouries. Then they headed for the Hārūnī palace, but the Turks rode out from it and repelled them. With rioting and violence spreading in the city, it was declared that a military stipend would be paid in return for the pledge of allegiance (*thumma waḍaᶜa al-ᶜaṭāᵓ ᶜalā al-bayᶜa*). No mention is made of further unrest, which matches al-Yaᶜqūbī's account.[31]

A final break in the account may occur here. The report continues:

> and the document for the pledge of allegiance (*kitāb al-bayᶜa*) was sent to Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir on the day on which the pledge of allegiance was given to him (al-Mustaᶜīn, i.e. Monday 9 June?). It reached Muḥammad on the second day (perhaps Tuesday 10 June?). It was brought to him by a brother of Utāmish, while Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh was at a private outdoor place (*fī nuzha lahu*). His chamberlain sent to him and informed him of his situation. He returned at once and sent for the Hashimites, the commanders and the army and paid them their stipends (*waḍaᶜa lahum al-arzāq*).[32]

This vignette of Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh on his private walk at Baghdad, interrupted with the news of al-Mustaᶜīn's accession, concludes al-Ṭabarī's account. (There is, perhaps pointedly, no mention of his taking a pledge of allegiance to al-Mustaᶜīn, although it must in fact have taken place; he was recognised in his position as governor of Iraq by the new caliph.[33]) Al-Ṭabarī's narrative highlights

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the irregular nature of the accession of al-Mustaᶜīn, with the unusual pact (*ḥilf*) among the Turkish, Arab and Ushrūsanī troops to recognise their leaders' choice. One suspects that, besides his hostility to the damaging consequences of the Turkish domination of the caliphate (which he shares with the other sources), al-Ṭabarī had little sympathy for the regime that exiled his former patron, ᶜUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā, at the end of the same year – an event that appears to have prompted al-Ṭabarī to leave Iraq, returning only in 870.[34]

The accession of al-Muᶜtazz and the outbreak of civil war

The faction that had installed al-Mustaᶜīn in June 862 disintegrated quickly. Bughā the Elder died that year, and Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb was exiled.[35] In June 863, al-Mustaᶜīn's vizier, Utāmish, was killed by Waṣīf and Bughā the Younger.[36] Eighteen months later a split within the Turkish commanders left one Baghār (said to have led the killing of al-Mutawakkil in 861) in open conflict with Waṣīf and Bughā the Younger. Waṣīf and Bughā the Younger fled to Baghdad, together with al-Mustaᶜīn himself.[37] The caliph and the two commanders were followed by almost all the non-Turkish commanders and other officials, as well as those Turks loyal to Waṣīf and Bughā.[38]

Because the tensions between the Turkish commanders at Samarra and between the Arab and Persianate populations of Samarra and Baghdad remained unresolved, this collapse of the clique that had brought al-Mustaᶜīn to power led not merely to another reconfiguration of alliances within the caliphal court but rather to a civil war between Baghdad and Samarra. With the caliph in exile in Baghdad, the Turks who remained in Samarra brought al-Muᶜtazz out of house arrest to make him caliph.[39] As al-Ṭabarī has it:

> War broke out between the people of Baghdad and the army of the ruling power (*jund al-sulṭān*), which was in Samarra. Everyone who was in Samarra pledged allegiance to al-Muᶜtazz and those of them (i.e. of the army) who were in Baghdad remained loyal to the pledge of allegiance to al-Mustaᶜīn.[40]

Some of the Persian and Arab commanders and administrators at Samarra are said to have pledged allegiance and then fled to Baghdad, even after having received appointments and robes of honour from the new caliph. The administrative officials who remained behind were all Turks.[41] An elderly son of Hārūn al-Rashīd is said to have refused their demand that he pledge allegiance to al-Muᶜtazz:

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> Abū Aḥmad b. al-Rashīd[42] was brought to the pledge of allegiance, according to what is reported, even though he had gout and had to be carried in a litter. He was ordered to give the pledge of allegiance, but refused, saying to al-Muᶜtazz, 'You have come out before to us, coming out in obedience. You divested yourself of it (i.e. the caliphate) and alleged that you would not take it up.' Al-Muᶜtazz responded, 'I was compelled to do that, and feared the sword.' Abū Aḥmad said, 'We did not know that you were compelled, and we have already pledged allegiance to this man (i.e., al-Mustaᶜīn). Do you want us to divorce our wives and give up our wealth? We do not know what will happen if you leave me in my condition until the people gather; otherwise, here is the sword.'
>
> Al-Muᶜtazz then said, 'Leave him.' He was returned to his house without a pledge of allegiance.[43]

Hārūn al-Rashīd's son insisting upon the legality of an earlier pledge brings to mind the war brought about by the violation of the previous covenant of succession, made by his father sixty years earlier, in 805; that Abū Aḥmad is old and ill seems symbolic of the degenerate state of the caliphate under Turkish domination. His invocation of the oaths and gesture towards the sword are in a literary tradition of ironic accounts of the pledge of allegiance;[44] the caliph's willingness to overlook the legalities of the situation also seems to point to al-Ṭabarī's disapproval of the Turks' disastrous disregard for Islamic law.

NOTES

1. Correcting 'Abū ᶜAbd Allāh and al-Muᶜtazz bi'llāh'.
2. Yaq., ii, 602–3.
3. Ṭab., iii, 1461.
4. Ṭab., iii, 1471.
5. Ṭab., iii, 1471–3, 1473–5.
6. Northedge, *Samarra*, 198–200.
7. On al-Ḥayr, see Northedge, *Samarra*, 150–2.
8. Ṭab., iii. 1473.
9. Northedge, *Samarra*, 198–200.
10. See above, pp. 157, 198, 216–17.
11. Alternatively, the two heirs' names may have been expunged from the record. See further below, pp. 286–7.
12. See above, pp. 158–9.
13. Ṭab., iii, 1479.
14. Kennedy, *Armies*, 125–6, 137–8.
15. Mas., v, §2961 (vii, 276); Gordon, *Breaking*, 7–8, 40–2; Kennedy, *Armies*, 126, 199–204.
16. Ṭab., iii, 1486, 1485.
17. Ṭab., iii, 1489.

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18. Ṭab., iii, 1486–8.
19. He was deposed and killed in 869; see Ṭab., iii, 1712ff.
20. Ṭab., iii, 1488–95.
21. Ṭab., iii, 1488–9.
22. See Madelung, 'New documents', 336–8.
23. Ṭab., iii, 1491; tr. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiv, 215 (J. L. Kraemer), with changes.
24. Ṭab., iii, 1494; tr. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiv, 217–18 (J. L. Kraemer), with changes. The absence of the coinage is notable. On *rābiṭa* as cavalry, see also Kennedy, *Armies*, 49–50, 89, 112.
25. For the date of al-Muntaṣir's death, see Yaq., ii, 603; Ṭab., iii, 1495, 1501; cf. Ṭab., iii, 1498.
26. Ṭab., iii, 1501–6.
27. Ṭab., iii, 1501–3.
28. This discrepancy between this and the earlier account can also be explained by seeing them both as two accounts of the same pledge of allegiance on Monday 6 Rabīᶜ II (Monday 9 June), one that passes over the unrest and another that describes it at length.
29. Ṭab., iii, 1503.
30. Cf. Yaq., ii, 604, where these are simply described as the Abnāᵓ, and there is no mention of al-Yaᶜqūbī's patrons, the Ṭāhirids.
31. Yaq., ii, 603–4.
32. Ṭab., iii, 1505.
33. Ṭab., iii, 1506.
34. Ṭab., iii, 1506; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ṭabarī' (C. E. Bosworth); cf. Yaq., ii, 606.
35. Ṭab., iii, 1506, 1508.
36. Yaq., ii, 606; Ṭab., iii, 1512–14.
37. Ṭab., iii, 1535–42.
38. Ṭab., iii, 1542–5, 1549–50.
39. Ṭab., iii, 1545ff.
40. Ṭab., iii, 1542.
41. Ṭab., iii, 1549–50.
42. Muḥammad b. al-Rashīd: Yaq., ii, 521; Ṭab., iii, 759.
43. Ṭab., iii, 1549.
44. See above, p. 15, and, on coercion, Din., 314, 328, 357; Yaq., ii, 409–10, 490; Ṭab., ii, 216–27, 1752–3, iii, 769, 777, 996; [Pseudo-] Ibn Qutayba *al-Imāma*, ii, 225, 321.

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CHAPTER

16

ABBASID DOCUMENTS FOR CALIPHAL ACCESSION

Al-Ṭabarī's accounts of al-Muntaṣir's coup in 861 and of the outbreak of civil war in 865 include the first two complete, extant copies of documents said to have been written for the accessions of specific caliphs.[1] The first is said to have been composed for the accession of al-Muntaṣir in December 861 ('I'), the second for the accession of his brother al-Muʿtazz (and the succession of al-Muʾayyad) in February 865 ('II'). As with other such copies of documents, certainty about the provenance and authenticity of the text is impossible, but the proximity of al-Ṭabarī to the original composition, and the numerous parallels with other similar products of the Abbasid *dīwān*, inspire some confidence in the documents.[2]

Saʿīd b. Ḥumayd, the chief scribe of al-Muntaṣir's vizier, Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb, is the most likely author of the first document.[3] Saʿīd was not exiled with his master after the accession of al-Mustaʿīn, and, after the fall of Utamīsh, he became the head of the chancery (*ṣāḥib dīwān al-rasāʾil*). If Saʿīd did not flee to Baghdad with the caliph in February 865 (and other Iranian and Arab officials and commanders fled to Baghdad later),[4] then the second document, which is almost identical to the first, was probably also composed by him. Alternatively, the second document may have been copied from the *dīwān* at Samarra by someone else, or – less likely – one or other of the texts may be a fictitious copy of its parallel.[5]

'I' is translated here for two reasons.[6] First, it is the earliest extant copy of a document for an accessional pledge of allegiance and thus is very important evidence for the development of the ritual of caliphal accession. Second, it is composed according to a pattern that became normative for such documents for the caliphal accession for centuries afterwards. Texts very similar to it are reproduced

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with more-or-less significant variations in numerous subsequent sources for later pledges of allegiance to Abbasid caliphs.[7] The second text, from 865, is so similar that there is no need to translate it separately; instead the important differences between the two are noted.

§1 In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
You pledge allegiance (*tubāyiᶜūna*) to the Servant of God, al-Muntaṣir bi'llāh, Commander of the Faithful;[8] a pledge (*bayᶜa*) of willing obedience (*tawᶜ*),[9] firm conviction (*iᶜtiqād*), consent (*riḍā*) and desire (*raghba*),[10] with sincerity in your innermost thoughts (*bi-ikhlāṣ min sarāᵓirikum*),[11] with a responsive mind and pure intentions, neither forced nor compelled, but rather acknowledging (and) knowing what is in this pledge and what it affirms (*taᵓkīdihā*) from obedience of God and fear of Him (*min ṭāᶜati'llāh wa-taqwāhu*),[12] glorification of God's religion (*dīn*) and His right (*ḥaqq*), from making widespread the rectitude of the servants of God, unity of opinion (*ijtimāᶜ al-kalima*), setting in order of muddled affairs (*lamm al-shaᶜath*), calming of the masses (*sukūn al-dahmāᵓ*), security of outcomes (*amn al-ᶜawāqib*), the fortifying of those in possession (of truth) (*ᶜizz al-awlīyāᵓ*),[13] and the crushing of heretics (*qamᶜ al-mulḥidīn*) – on the grounds that (*ᶜalā anna*) Muḥammad, the Imam, al-Muntaṣir bi'llāh, is the Servant of God and His Caliph.[14]

§2 Incumbent upon you (*alaykum*) is obedience to him, sincere advice to him, fulfilment of his right and contract (*al-wafāᵓ bi-ḥaqqihi wa-ᶜaqdihi*), neither doubting, nor dissembling, nor being partisan, nor having misgivings. (You do this in a state of) hearing him and obeying, acting peacefully[15] and assisting,[16] being loyal and being honest, giving sincere advice in private and in public (*fi'l-sirr wa'l-ᶜalāniya*), hastening and stopping (*al-khufūf wa'l-wuqūf*)[17] in everything which the Servant of God, the Imam, al-Muntaṣir bi'llāh, the Commander of the Believers,[18] orders; and (you do this) on condition that you are supporters of his friends (*awliyāᵓ awliyāᵓihi*) and enemies of his enemies among the elite and the masses, near and far, (and that) you will hold fast, through his pledge of allegiance, to the fulfilment of the contract (*wafāᵓ al-ᶜaqd*), and the guarantee of the covenant (*dhimmat al-ᶜahd*); your innermost thoughts in that will be like your public behaviour; your private feelings like your tongues; pleased with what the Commander of the Faithful is pleased with for you in this world and the next.[19]

§3 Incumbent upon you is your giving,[20] after your renewal of this pledge upon yourselves (*ᶜalā anfusikum*) and your reaffirmation of it[21] upon your necks, the clasp of your right hands (*ṣafqa aymānikum*)[22] to the Commander of the Faithful willingly, obediently, with soundness in your hearts, your spirits and your intentions,[23] that you do not act to undo (*naqḍ*) anything which God has

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made binding upon you (*mimmā akkada[hu] Allāh ᶜalaykum*),[24] that no wielder of undue influence (*mamīlun*)[25] in this matter will deflect you in this from giving support and sincerity, honest advice and help, that you do not change, nor that one among you should go back on his intentions,[26] with his hidden feelings being toward changing his public behaviour, that your pledge, for which you have given[27] your word (*alsinatakum*) and your covenants (*ᶜuhūdakum*), is a pledge which God brings forth from your hearts for choice of it and for firm belief in it,[28] for fulfilment of His compact (*dhimma*) by it and for your purity in supporting it, and friendship to its adherents.

§4 Corruption[29] does not contaminate that among you, nor dissembling, nor treachery,[30] nor casuistry (*taʾawwul*), so that you meet God loyal to His covenant (*ᶜahd*), fulfilling what you owe to Him (*haqqahu ᶜalaykum*), neither defrauding (Him) (*mustashrifīn*),[31] nor breaking (it), since: those of you who pledge allegiance to the Commander of the Faithful[32] in truth pledge allegiance to God; the hand of God is above their hands and whoever perjures himself in truth betrays his own soul, and whoever fulfils what he has covenanted with God, he will receive a great reward (cf. Q 48.10). That is (obligatory) upon you, and what this pledge of allegiance upon your necks affirms, which you have given with the clasp (*ṣafqa*) of your right hands, and what is imposed as conditional upon you by it from loyalty, help, constancy, effort, and sincerity.

§5 Over you is the covenant of God – and surely His covenant will be inquired of[33] (cf. Q 17.36, 33.15) – and the compact (*dhimma*) of God and the compact of His Messenger. The most important (*ashadd*) is what He imposed upon His prophets, on His messengers and on anyone of His servants in the way of His agreed compacts (*min muʾatakkad wathāʾiqihi*),[34] that you hear what He has imposed on you in this *bayᶜa* and do not substitute, that you obey, and do not rebel, that you are devoted and do not have misgivings,[35] and that you hold fast to what you have contracted with Him, a holding-fast of the people of obedience to their obedience and of possessors of the covenant and of the fulfilment to their fulfilment and what they owe (*ḥaqqihim*),[36] no whim turning you from in it, nor anything which influences, nor any distraction leading you astray from the right path in it,[37] spending freely in that of your souls and your efforts (*ijtihād*), and making a priority in it the obligation of religion and obedience (*ḥaqq al-dīn waʾl-ṭāᶜa*)[38] in what you have imposed upon yourselves, and God will not accept (anything) from you in this *bayᶜa* except fulfilment of it.

§6 Whoever perjures himself (*nakatha*) among you from those who have pledged allegiance to the Commander of the Faithful[39] concerning what is affirmed in

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this pledge, secretly or publicly, openly or concealed, has dissimulated in what he has given God from himself, and in what the covenants (*mawāthīq*) of the Commander of the Faithful[40] and the contracts (*ʿuhūd*) of God impose on him, acting in that lightly without seriousness[41] and relying on vanity without the help of right (*nuṣrat al-ḥaqq*), he strays from the way in which possessors of fulfilment of their covenants (*ūlū al-wafāʾ minhum bi-ʿuhūdihim*)[42] among them take refuge. Everything which each one of them who acts treacherously in that owns, breaking any aspect of the contract (*bi-shayʾ naqaḍa ʿahdahu*), from moveable wealth, landed property, freely grazing livestock, standing crops or dairy animals is alms (*ṣadaqa*) for the poor for the sake of the way of God.[43] It is forbidden from him for anything from that to return to his possessions by legal strategem, which he has provided for himself, or for which he employs devious means. Whatever he acquires as profit for the remainder of his life from the gain of wealth, (whether) its significance be small or its value great, this is its destiny until death takes him and his appointed time comes to him. All of the slaves which he owns on the day, for (the next) thirty years, male or female, are free for the sake of God, and his wives on the day on which the oath-breaking (*al-ḥinth*) happens to him, and those whom he marries after them (in the next) thirty years, are divorced irrevocably as a divorce of interdiction (*ṭalāq al-ḥaraj*)[44] and of the Sunna.[45] There is no restitution in it, nor return. And he is obliged to walk to the Sacred House of God for thirty pilgrimages;[46] God will not accept from him anything except the fulfilment of them, and he is cut off from God and His Messenger and God and His Messenger from him, in a dual cutting-off. God will not accept from him an exchange (*ṣarf*),[47] nor a substitute (*ʿadl*).[48]

§7 God is over you in that as a witness, and He is sufficient as a witness.[49]

COMMENTARY

The document is a script for a contract to be delivered orally and affirmed by a handclasp. It closely follows the scheme of the dispositive agreements for the succession, and the *amān*s that they resemble; that is, it follows the established forms for a contract in public law.

i. Introduction (§1)
ii. Terms (§2, §3, §4)
iii. Covenants (§5)
iv. Penalty clause (§6)
v/vi. Witnesses/conclusion (§7)

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In what follows, parallels with the fragments of eighth- and ninth-century Abbasid documents for the pledge of allegiance in the largely unpublished manuscripts of Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr's *Book of Poetry and Prose* are noted, along with other important parallels in the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, in the historical tradition and in other legal documents and legal treatises.

i. Introduction (§1)

The *basmala* is followed by a statement of the purpose of the contract: 'You pledge allegiance to . . .' (*tubāyiᶜūna*). This opening formula recalls the script for the pledge of allegiance to al-Walīd II and his sons, said to have been sent to Khurasan from Iraq in 743.[50] However, unlike the terse Umayyad text (which is only a few lines in its entirety), the remainder of the paragraph is a qualification of this intitial statement. This is in three parts: first, there is a qualification of the pledge itself, then an acknowledgement of the willingness and sincerity with which the pledge is given and, finally, an enumeration of the beneficial consequences of the pledge.

The *bayᶜa* is qualified by four attributes, the quranic and religious resonances of which establish the status of the caliph as God's representative on earth. It is a pledge 'of willing obedience' (*tawᶜ*), 'firm conviction' (*iᶜtiqād*), 'consent' (*riḍā*) and 'desire' (*raghba*). *Tawᶜ* ('willing obedience') evokes the quranic notion of Creation's 'willing obedience' (*tawᶜ*) to God.[51] *Iᶜtiqād* ('firm conviction') is not quranic, but is found in later texts in relation to questions of dogma and religion;[52] that is, those pledging are doing so convinced that the caliph is the rightful imam for the Muslims. The third term, *riḍā* ('consent'), carries all the resonance of this Abbasid quranic slogan, which implies the Muslims' approval of their leader and God's approval of their decision. The juxtaposition of *riḍā* with the fourth word, *raghba* ('desire', 'hope'), specifically recalls the quranic notion of accepting the will of God:

> If only they had been content (*raḍū*) with what God and His Messenger gave them, and had said, 'Sufficient to us is God! God and His Messenger will soon give us of His bounty: to God do we turn our hopes (*ilā Allāh rāghibūn*)!' (Q 9.59)

Very similar language is also found in the fragments recorded by Ibn Abī Ṭāhir.[53]

Second, it is set out that the pledge is given 'with sincerity in your innermost thoughts (*bi-ikhlāṣ min sarāʾirikum*), with a responsive mind and pure intentions (*inshirāḥ min ṣudūrikum wa-ṣidq min niyyātikum*)'. The quranic resonances here

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are the 'innermost thoughts' (*sarāʾir*), which recall 'the Day that (all) secret things will be tested' (*yawm tublā al-sarāʾir*)[54] and 'responsive mind' (*inshirāḥ min ṣuḍūr*), which recalls 'those whom God . . . opens their mind to Islam' (*man . . . Allāh . . . yashraḥ ṣadrahu*),[55] and other similar verses.[56] Both these phrases occur in other Abbasid *bayʿa* documents.[57]

The concern with a freely given pledge echoes other Abbasid documents and legal traditions concerning the illegitimacy of a pledge given under coercion and the importance of intention.[58] An emphasis on voluntary agreement also found its way into commercial law in the same period. In this text, *muqirr* and *ʿālim* resemble the language of commercial law, where *iqrār*, or 'acknowledgement', is given by someone making a contract and *fahm* is their 'understanding' of its terms.[59] What is 'acknowledged' in the *bayʿa* (as in some eighth-century texts relating to the pledge of allegiance) is the purpose of the contract, and the benefits that derive from it.[60] The benefits are those of other Abbasid rhetoric – notably *ijtimāʾ al-kalima* ('unity of opinion') and *lamm al-shaʿath* ('setting in order of muddled affairs').[61] The overall force of the clause is familiar from Umayyad rhetoric and from the patterns of Near Eastern kingship: obedience to the pledge of allegiance equates with obedience to God, through which the security of his flock is guaranteed.[62]

The pledge of allegiance is given 'on the grounds that (*ʿalā anna*) al-Muntaṣir is the Servant of God and His Caliph'. This appears to be a parallel from commercial law, corresponding with the principle of 'precaution' (*iḥtiyāt*), which requires that it must be possible to invalidate a contract based upon false premises or assumptions.[63] Its force here is perhaps more of recognition: 'on the understanding that', or even 'in recognition that'. However, its conditional implication is clear; the reciprocal and contractual understanding of the oath of allegiance was reflected in the language in which it was expressed.[64]

ii. Terms (§2, §3, §4)

The terms are introduced with the formula *ʿalaykum* ('[obligatory] upon you'), which is familiar from very early Arabic agreements.[65] The terms themselves also echo much earlier political agreements in Arabic (and other Near Eastern oaths of alliance and loyalty): it is a pledge for loyalty in war and politics, expressed through the quranic formula of 'hearing and obeying' (*al-samʿ lahu wa'l-ṭāʿa*) and invoking 'sincere advice' (*naṣīḥa*) and loyalty in war and to the caliph's allies and enmity to his enemies (*nuṣra . . . awliyāʾ awliyāʾihi wa-aʿdāʾ aʿdāʾihi*).[66] Besides the use of 'hearing and obeying' to convey willing obedience, the terms also allude to the quranic language of covenant through 'fulfilment' (*wafāʾ*)[67] of the agreement, variously described as a 'right' (*ḥaqq*), 'contract' (*ʿaqd*) and 'the

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guarantee of the covenant' (*dhimmat al-ᶜahd*).[68] All this lexicon is familiar from other Abbasid texts, and much of it is much earlier than that.

However, as in the introduction, and in the Abbasid succession documents, there is an emphasis on intention, which is not found in the very early texts, but does echo the ninth-century legal tradition. For example, the connection of the quranic formula about alms-giving – 'in private and public' (*fi'l-sirr wa'l-ᶜalāniya*) – with the obligation of obedience and sincere advice recalls both the document for the abdication of ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā in 776 and one of Ibn Abī Ṭāhir's copies of an Abbasid document.[69] In holding to the pledge of allegiance, it is asserted that 'your innermost thoughts in that will be like your public behaviour; your private feelings like your tongues' (*sarāᵓirukum fī-dhālik mithl ᶜalāniyatikum wa-ḍamāᵓirukum mithl alsinatikum*). As in the earlier Abbasid documents, the lexicon, and the concepts it expresses, recall the edicts attributed to the Sasanian kings.[70]

The biggest divergence between the two documents of 861 (I) and 865 (II) occurs between §2 and §3 of the terms of the agreement. In I, §2 concludes: '(you are) pleased with what the Commander of the Faithful is pleased with for you in this world and the next'. §3 then begins a new clause, which concerns the giving of the pledge of allegiance itself by a handclasp:

> Incumbent upon you is your giving, after your renewal of this his pledge upon yourselves and your reaffirmation of it, the clasp of your right hands to the Commander of the Faithful, with soundness in your hearts, your spirits, your intentions, and on condition that . . .

In II, there is no new phrase or clause, instead it reads:

> (You are) pleased with what the Commander of the Faithful is pleased with after your renewal of this pledge of allegiance of yours upon yourselves and your reaffirmation of it upon your necks in a handclasp willingly, obediently, with soundness in your hearts, your spirits, your intentions, and (with what the Commander of the Faithful is pleased with) concerning the succession to the covenant of the Muslims for Ibrāhīm al-Muᵓayyad bi'llāh, and on condition that . . .

The variation raises the suspicion that, rather than being an adaptation from I, II is in fact the original, from which I was fabricated – perhaps for the rhetorical purpose of highlighting the irony of such pledges on the eve of civil war. The association between *riḍā* and the succession in II might support this hypothesis. However, it is impossible now to know for certain. In both, the language is

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typical of the output of the Abbasid chancery, with its emphasis on intention and its explicit statement that the pledge of allegiance is confirmed by a handclasp (*ṣafqa*), the same means by which a commercial contract, to which it lent its name, was concluded.[71]

The obligations imposed by the contract are then reiterated, before a clause (§4) that functions as a transition between the terms and the covenants. It reiterates the terms of the agreement for a third time and then invokes the Qurʾān to assert the obligation to fulfil them:

> So that you meet God loyal to His covenant (*ʿahd*), fulfilling what you owe to Him (*haqqahu ʿalaykum*), neither defrauding (Him) (*mustashrifīn*), nor breaking (it), since: those of you who pledge allegiance to the Commander of the Faithful in truth pledge allegiance to God; the hand of God is above their hands and whoever perjures himself in truth betrays his own soul, and whoever fulfils what he has covenanted with God, he will receive a great reward.

The quranic verse reads:

> Verily, whoever makes a pledge to you (*yubāyiʿūnaka*), in truth makes a pledge to God (*yubāyiʿūna'llāh*): the hand of God is above their hands (*yadu'llāhi fawqa aydiyhim*). Whoever betrays [it] (*nakatha*) in truth betrays his own soul and whoever fulfils what he has covenanted with God, He will grant him a great reward (*ajran aẓīman*). (Q 48.10)

In the *bayʿa* document, the verse refers not to a pledge to the Prophet ('you' in the quranic text), but to 'the Commander of the Faithful'. In all other respects, however, it is a direct quotation. This is the first extant quotation of this quranic verse in a copy of a document relating directly to a *bayʿa* to a caliph or his successor. The same verse became a standard quranic citation in subsequent pledges of allegiance to the caliph, where the caliph continued to stand in place of the Prophet.[72]

iii. Covenants (§5)

The covenant section of the document is relatively unremarkable. As with many other features of the text, it is patterned quite closely on the eighth- and early ninth-century Abbasid *amān*s and *shurūṭ* documents for the succession.[73] Both documents are slightly fuller and more elaborate than their antecedents and, in addition to the conventional use of the lexicon of verse 91 of *sūrat al-Nahl*, both the documents allude to verse 15 of *sūrat al-Aḥẓāb*:

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> And yet they had already covenanted with God not to turn their backs, and a covenant with God will (surely) be inquired of (*wa-kāna ʿahd Allāh masʾūlan*). (Q 33.15; cf. Q 17.36)

The same quranic allusion is found in an Abbasid *amān* from *c*. 755, in the 'testimony' of ʿAlī al-Riḍā of 817 and in the covenant for the succession of al-Mutawakkil of 850.[74]

iv. Penalty clause (§6)

Again, the penalty clause is a slightly more elaborate version of the penalty clauses of earlier conditional Abbasid documents for *amān*s and *bayʿa*s, in which the 'oaths of the *bayʿa*' for loss of wealth and slaves, divorcing wives and making pilgrimages to the Kaʿba are invoked. As in many of these texts, it is also made explicit that a violation of the agreement would leave the violator outside the protection of God or His Messenger (*barīʾa min Allāh wa-rasūlihi*). The reference to God's accepting neither 'an exchange, or a substitute' (*lā . . . ṣarfan wa-lā ʿadlan*) echoes Abbasid *amān* texts, as well as the Qurʾān and the Consitution of Medina.[75]

v/vi. Witnesses/Conclusion (§7)

As a script for a ceremony, rather than a dispositive document *stricto sensu*, the conclusion and witnesssing clause is suitably brief, and conforms to the pattern for the conclusion of both Umayyad and Abbasid documents.[76]

CONCLUSION

The two *bayʿa* documents of 861 and 865 show that, by the mid-ninth century, the seventh-century *bayʿa* ritual of customary gesture and oral oath formulas had become a carefully scripted ceremony. That the script for the *bayʿa* then remained substantially unchanged suggests that the mid-ninth century was an important moment in the formation of the 'classical' understanding of the pledge of allegiance, as in so many other aspects of Islamic political culture. Some of the roots of this transformation lie in the Marwanid foundation of an Islamic state after *c*. 700, and particularly in the expansion of the *dīwān al-rasāʾil* in the 730s. However, the oath text that was to be read out for the pledge of allegiance to al-Walīd II and his sons in 743 (see Chapter 9, above) was only a few lines long and lacked many of the elements of the two middle Abbasid documents. (The much longer accompanying *ʿahd* of al-Walīd II does include some material

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found in the two Abbasid documents, but the separation of *ʿahd* and oath formula indicates that the scripted oath-formula had been transformed since 743.) The immediate origins of the form and lexicon of the documents of 861 and 865 are probably to be located not in the expansion of the *dīwān al-rasāʾil* under the later Marwanids, but in the changes in the ceremonial of the caliphate that took place after the Abbasid Revolution. As in earlier Abbasid texts, the oath of allegiance is conceived of as a promissory agreement or contract, where the implications of the promise of obedience to al-Muntaṣir, God's caliph, are 'acknowledged' and 'understood', as are the benefits resulting from it. Thus the agreement is a contractual and reciprocal one, which parallels the development of commercial law in Abbasid times.

However, the caliph is the representative of God (and God does not renege on his promises) so, in practice, the agreement asserts the absolute authority of the caliph over his followers – a point that is reiterated in the constant invocation of the obligation of obedience. The invocation of verse 10 of *sūrat al-Fatḥ* makes this absolutely clear:

> Those of you who pledge allegiance to the Commander of the Faithful in truth pledge allegiance to God; the hand of God is above their hands and whoever perjures himself in truth betrays his own soul, and whoever fulfils what he has covenanted with God, he will receive a great reward.

From after the 860s, the same verse became a *locus classicus* for the caliphal *bayʿa*, as one might expect, given its aptness. It recurs in most later documents for the oath of allegiance.[77]

Because these are the first extant scripts for an accessional *bayʿa*, we do not know when the verse became a standard feature of a scripted accessional ritual. However, the notion that the verse expresses – that blessings from God were the reward for loyalty to his representatives and violation of agreements with them led to material and spiritual destruction – was axiomatic in the late antique Near East and thus in early Islam. Close parallels to the quranic formulation (and also to the expression of the same idea in the 'Constitution of Medina') are associated with loyalty to the caliph in two letters composed by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (d. 750) and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. *c*. 757).

ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's letter to al-Walīd II, written in 743 on behalf of Marwān b. Muḥammad, has:

> Thanks be to God who chose the Commander of the Faithful for His caliphate and (for) the pledges (by which) the bonds of His religion (are tied), (Who) protected him from what the oppressors plotted and (Who) raised him up and cast them

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> down; and whoever rouses malice against that in (any) affairs will destroy his own soul and anger his Lord (*fa-man aqāma ᶜalā tilka al-khasīsa min al-umūr awtagha*[78] *nafsahu wa-askhaṭa rabbahu*).[79]

In his *Risāla fi'l-ṣaḥāba*, composed in *c*. 757, Ibn al-Muqaffaᶜ stated that, if the caliph remained true to the essential tenets of Islam, the people owed him a duty of absolute obedience:

> As for our assertion that obedience is due to the imam when it would not be due to another, this is in the interpretation, management and government of that which God has given the reins and ties into the hands of the imam . . . All of these matters, and the like of them from the obedience of God – He is powerful and glorified! – are obligatory, nobody among the people has a right over them except the imam, and whoever rebels against the imam in them, or deserts him, then he has destroyed his own soul (*wa-man ᶜāṣā al-imām fīhā aw khadhalahu fa-qad awtagha nafsahu*).[80]

Both writers parallel the Qurʾān quite closely in the structure of the phrase, and their emphasis on 'destruction of the soul':

> *fa-man nakatha fa-innamā yankuthu ᶜalā nafsahu* [*sic*] . . .
> . . . whoever betrays (it) in truth betrays his own soul . . . (Q 48.10)

> *fa-man aqāma ᶜalā tilka al-khasīsa min al-umūr awbaqa nafsahu . . .*
> whoever rouses malice against that in (any) affairs destroys his own soul . . . (ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd)

> *wa-man ᶜāṣā al-imām fīhā aw khadhalahu fa-qad awtagha nafsahu . . .*
> whoever rebels against the imam in these (matters), or deserts him, then he has destroyed his own soul . . . (Ibn al-Muqaffaᶜ)

Although all ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd's prose is very heavily indebted to the language of the Qurʾān, he rarely quotes from it at length;[81] Ibn al-Muqaffaᶜ very rarely quotes it.[82] The use of the verb *awtagha* echoes the 'Constitution of Medina'.[83] However, the two letters make it clear that the idea of 'the destruction of the soul' as the consequence of violation of the covenant with the caliph was well established in prose originating from close to the caliphal court in the mid-eighth century.

Given the volume of material that has been lost, it is very likely that the quranic verse itself was invoked at a pledge of allegiance earlier than 861. The

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purported letter of ʿUthmān to Mecca in 656 – probably in fact to be dated between *c*. 720 and 823 – also cites the verse in connection with obedience to the caliph,[84] as does some anecdotal material about the Umayyads in the ninth-century tradition.[85] The Umayyads quoted from the Qurʾān in their letters and sermons but, as noted in Chapter 9, the absence of direct quotation of verse 10 of *sūrat al-Fatḥ* – though not its underlying principles – from Umayyad texts may indicate that the pledge of allegiance to the Umayyads was expresssed in monotheist language that recalled the Qurʾān (and the Bible) but did not quote from it *in extenso*. An emphasis on explicit connections between events in the Prophetic *sīra* and caliphal authority would have had a new rhetorical utility after the Abbasid Revolution, with its Hashimite (or 'proto-Shiʿite') ideology. Greater use of verses associated with the Prophet's status might also reflect the changing status of the Qurʾān as a source of law during the eighth and ninth centuries. In this use of the Qurʾān, as in other respects, the documents of 861 and 865 reflect the emergence of the outlines of an Islamic culture that has recognisably 'classical' features.

NOTES

1. Ṭab., iii, 1475–8, 1545–9; see above, pp. 285, 291.
2. e.g. IAṬ, fos 125aff., and above, Ch. 12.
3. On Saʿīd, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 137; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, i, 288, 293, ii, 735.
4. Ṭab., iii, 1514, 1542, 1549, 1565.
5. See in particular the discrepancies between the two at the end of §3 and the beginning of §4, below. (*Both* could conceivably be fictions, but even if they are – and this seems unlikely – they appear to be firmly grounded in mid-ninth-century chancery practice.)
6. Both have been translated into English before: al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiv, 199–202 (J. L. Kraemer), xxxv, 36–8 (G. Saliba).
7. al-Ṣābī, *Ghurar al-balāgha*, 161–2, 162–5; Ibn Ḥamdūn, *al-Tadhkira,* iii, 74–5. Al-Ṣābī's documents are reproduced in Qal., ix, 285–7, 280–3, respectively; Ibn Ḥamdūn's text is found at Qal., ix, 283–5; it is translated into German by von Kremer, 'Zwei arabische Urkunden', and into English by Rahman, 'The oath of allegiance'. Cf. Qal., xiii, 211–14; Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh-i-Bayhaqī*, 398–402; Vermeulen, 'La *bayʿa* califale'.
8. II 'the Servant of God, the Imam, al-Muʿtazz bi'llāh, Commander of the Faithful'.
9. Cf. Q 3.83; Q 9.53; Q 13.15; Q 41.11; Lane, s.v.
10. This reading is based on the punctuation in Ṣaf., iv, 224. *Raghiba* takes *fī*, not *bi-* (Lane, s.v.), suggesting that Ṣafwat's reading is correct. II omits *bi-*, 'sincere in your innermost thoughts'.
11. Cf. Q 86.9.
12. II: 'what it affirms from fear of God and love of obedience to Him' (*īthār ṭāʿatihi*).
13. Manuscript O gives *wa-ʿizza* ('glory') rather than *wa-ʿizz* ('fortifying'). It is possible that *awliyāʾ* could refer to the caliphs, but the opposition with heretics suggests that it has a more general implication: thus, Kraemer gives 'friends': al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiv, 199 and n. 674.
14. II: 'Abū ʿAbd Allāh, al-Muʿtazz bi'llāh is the Servant of God and His Caliph'.

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15. II: *al-mushāyiᶜa* (‘acting as a supporter’), omitted in manuscript O: Ṭab., iii, 1546, n. *d*.
16. *al-nuṣra*, omitted in II.
17. For the phrase *al-khufūf wa’l-wuqūf*, Kraemer cites de Geoje’s *Indices*, ccxxvii: al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiv, 200, n. 675.
18. II: ‘Abū ᶜAbd Allāh, the Imam, al-Muᶜtazz bi’llāh, the Commander of the Faithful’.
19. II omits ‘for you in this world and the next’ and instead continues the phrase: ‘pleased with what the Commander of the Believers is pleased with after your renewal of this pledge of allegiance of yours’.
20. Omitted in II, where the phrase continues; see above, n.19.
21. Manuscript C adds ‘over yourselves and’ (*ᶜalā anfusikum wa-*) here: Ṭab., iii, 1476, n. *e*.
22. II has ‘and your reaffirmation of it by a handclasp’, omitting ‘of your right hands’.
23. II adds ‘and (with what the Commander of the Faithful is pleased with) concerning the succession to the covenant of the Muslims for Ibrāhīm al-Muʾayyad bi’llāh, the Brother of the Commander of the Faithful’ (*wa-bi-wilāyat ᶜahd al-Muslimīn li-Ibrāhīm al-Muʾayyad bi’llāh akhī amīr al-muʾminīn*).
24. Following manuscript O’s *akkadahu*; II omits *Allāh*; in manuscript O, II omits *Allāh ᶜalaykum*.
25. Ṣaf., iv, 225, n. 1. Cf. Ṭab., iii, 1477, l. 12, iii, 1548, l. 2.
26. II: *bayᶜatihi* (‘his pledge of allegiance’).
27. Manuscripts C and O have ‘which I have given you’ (*allatī aᶜṭaytukum*): Ṭab., iii, 1476, n. *l*.
28. *iᶜtiqādihā*; II: *iᶜtimādihā* (‘confirmation of it’).
29. *daghal*; II. *nifāq* (‘hypocrisy’, ‘dissimulation’).
30. *iḥtiyāl* omitted in II.
31. Following Lane, s.v., Ṣaf., iv, 225, n. 4, says it should be read to mean ‘committing an outrage’ (*ẓalama*). Kraemer gives ‘being presumptuous’: al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiv, 200. The manuscripts are not clear. It appears in one manuscript for II as *mustarībīn*, ‘having misgivings’: Ṭab., iii, 1547. One manuscript uses the same unclear orthography in both locations: Ṭab., iii, 1477, n. *b*, 1547, n. *d*.
32. II adds: ‘a pledge of allegiance of his caliphate and the possession of the covenant after him belonging to Ibrāhīm al-Muʾayyad bi’llāh, the Brother of the Commander of the Faithful’ (*bayᶜa khilāfatihi wa-wilāyat al-ᶜahd min baᶜdihi li-Ibrāhīm al-Muʾayyad bi’llāh akhī amīr al-muʾminīn*).
33. This phrase has been added in the margin (Ṭab., iii, 1477), but occurs in the text in II.
34. II: *min muwākīdihi wa-mawāthīqihi*.
35. II omits ‘that you obey, and do not rebel, that you are devoted and do not have misgivings’.
36. II omits ‘and what they owe (*wa-ḥaqqihim*)’.
37. II: ‘nor dissension or distraction leading your hearts astray from the right path’.
38. II adds *al-wafāʾ* (‘fulfilment’).
39. II adds ‘and the successor to the covenant of the Muslims, the Brother of the Commander of the Faithful’.
40. Manuscript O omits *amīr al-muʾminīn* (‘Commander of the Faithful’): Ṭab., iii, 1477, n. *q*, as does II.
41. See Ṣaf., iv, 226; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, xxxiv, 201 (J. L. Kraemer).
42. II: ‘possessors of judgement’ (*ūlū al-raʾy*).
43. II adds *maḥbūs* (‘given as a religious bequest’).

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44. See Ṣaf., iii, 140, n. 4.
45. MS O omits *wa'l-sunna*: Ṭab., iii, 1478, n. *d*.
46. II omits 'There is no restitution in it, nor return. And he is obliged to walk to the Sacred House of God for thirty pilgrimages.'
47. Ṣaf., iv, 226, n. 5, defines it as *tawba*, i.e. 'penance'.
48. Cf. Q 2.48, 123, *et al*.: *wa-lā yuqbalu minhā ᶜadlun*. Ṣaf., iv, 226, n. 5, defines it as *fiḍya*, or 'ransom'.
49. II adds *wa-lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwa illā bi'llāh al-ᶜalīy al-ᶜaẓīm wa-ḥasabanā Allāh wa-niᶜam al-wakīl* ('There is no power and no strength save in God, the Supreme, the Mighty. God suffices us and He is the best Guardian).
50. See above, p. 169; the only difference is the absence of *li-*, here, following the quranic use of a direct object with the verb *bāyaᶜa*.
51. Q 3.83, Q 9.53, Q 13.15, Q 41.11.
52. Lane, s.v.
53. IAṬ, fo. 125a, ll. 18–19, fo. 128b, l.6.
54. Q 86.9.
55. Q 6.125.
56. Cf. Q 16.106, Q 20.25, Q 39.22, Q 94.1.
57. IAṬ, fo. 125a, l. 15; see above, pp. 199, 209, 236–7.
58. IAṬ, fos 125a, l. 15, 125b, l. 15; see above, pp. 199, 209, 236–7.
59. Wakin, *Function*, 33–5, 41–2, 47, 67; see above, pp. 199, 209, 236–7.
60. See above, pp. 209–10.
61. IAṬ, fo. 128b, l. 18, and the *khuṭba* of Yūsuf b. al-Qāsim (see above, pp. 217-18). *Lamm al-shaᶜath* is found in the *ḥadīth*: Wensinck, *Concordance*, s.v. *shaᶜath*.
62. See above, pp. 8, 33–4, 103, 109, 153.
63. Wakin, *Function*, 34.
64. For an early Abbasid understanding of reciprocity in the *bayᶜa*, see Bal., iii, 168–9 = Bal. (D), iii, 189–90. *ᶜalā anna* occurs in the later *bayᶜa* documents cited above, n. 7.
65. e.g. the *bayᶜa* to al-Walīd II and his sons; see above, p. 169.
66. See above, Introduction, n. 30, and p. 27.
67. Not in the Qurʾān, but the root *wāw–fāʾ–yāʾ* recurs in relation to the 'fulfilment' of God's covenant and other agreements: AB, s.vv.
68. Cf. AB, s.vv.
69. IAṬ, fo. 129a, l. 6; see above, p. 236.
70. See above, p. 237.
71. Wakin, *Function*, 81, 98, 100; above, pp. 199, 218, 245.
72. Tyan, *Institutions*, i, 326–7; Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 40–1. On *sūrat al-Fatḥ*, see above, pp. 49–52.
73. See above, pp. 237–9.
74. Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 253, 265. See above, pp. 263–4, 277–8.
75. Marsham and Robinson, 'Safe-conduct', 255, 279, 281. Cf. Q 2.123; IH, 342.
76. See above, pp. 241–3.
77. See, e.g., above, n. 7, and cf. Tyan, *Institutions*, i, 326–7; Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 40–1.
78. Ṭab., ii, 1753, n. *c*, has *awthaqa*, which makes no sense, ᶜAbbās gives *awbaqa*; *awtagha*, after Ibn al-Muqaffaᶜ, below, is preferable.
79. Ṭab., ii, 1752–3. Cf. Bal., vii, 495–6; ᶜAbbās, *ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd*, 298.

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80. Kurd Alī, *Rasāʾil al-bulaghāʾ*, 121; Pellat, *Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*, 29, §17.
81. al-Qāḍī, 'Impact of the Qurʾān'.
82. Kurd ʿAlī, *Rasāʾil al-bulaghāʾ*, 122; Pellat, *Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*, 19, n. 1, 31, n. 1.
83. See above, p. 50.
84. Ṭab., iii, 3042, and see above, p. 71.
85. e.g. Bal., iv/2, 483 = Bal.(D), vi, 309–10.

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CONCLUSION

Although the script for the inauguration of the Abbasid caliph at his public pledge of allegiance was to remain substantially unchanged after 861, the first explicit written formulations of a *theory* of caliphal accession and succession were composed over 100 years later. They were written by theologians and jurists working at the Abbasid court in the 990s and after. This was the era of the restoration of the status of the Abbasid caliphate after its domination for much of the tenth century by Shiᶜite military elites. Under the caliph al-Qādir (r. 991–1031) and his son al-Qāᵓim (r. 1031–75), the need to refute Shiᶜite theology, which had rejected the interpretations of the Sunni scholars and thus also the authority of the Abbasid caliphs, appears to have spurred the articulation of a Sunni theory of the caliphate. According to the Shiᶜites, the Sunnis should have pledged allegiance not to Abū Bakr as Muḥammad's successor in 632, but to his designated successor, ᶜAlī, and then to a foreordained sequence of ᶜAlī's descendants. The first Sunni formulations of a theory of the caliphate were explicitly composed as refutations of Shiᶜite ideas.[1]

Against the claim that the leadership of the Muslim empire had been usurped at the outset, Sunni theologians of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries argued that the imams recognised by the consensus (*ijmāᶜ*) of the majority of Muslims had in fact been legitimate because, according to the Prophet, the Muslims 'could not agree upon error'. The legitimacy of the caliphs was based not upon 'designation' (*naṣṣ*) but upon the 'choice' (*ikhtiyār*) of the Muslims, which reflected the will of God. The hereditary element in the imamate was also downplayed; most scholars retained the notion that the caliph should be from Quraysh, but the Hashimite basis of the Abbasid caliphate (from before the Sunni–Shiᶜite split was fully articulated) was ignored. The election of the caliph

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took place through the public pledge of allegiance (*bayᶜa*) of as few as one of a rather vaguely defined body of 'people of loosing and binding' (*ahl al-ḥall wa'l-ᶜaqd*). In most circumstances, only the willing renunciation of the agreement by the elected caliph (*khalᶜ al-nafs*) could undo the covenant. Alternatively, the incumbent caliph's choice of successor was accepted as a legitimate covenant for the succession (*ᶜahd*). The details of the interpretation varied, but their basis was always the Sunna of the Prophet and the early, Medinan caliphate, as well as the models of later pious caliphs, notably ᶜUmar II and the early Abbasids. As in other areas of Islamic jurisprudence, where these sources did not provide answers, reasoning by analogy (*qiyās*) was employed. The semantic and conceptual overlap between political and commercial contract (*ᶜaqd*) made contracts of marriage (*nikāḥ*), sale (*bayᶜ*) and manumission (*ᶜitq*) source of analogy for the pledge of allegiance.[2]

The treatises of the tenth- and eleventh-century Sunni theologians and jurists are 'traditionist' interpretations of history in every sense of the word – Sunni pietist readings of the corpus of the collective memory of the Islamic polity, founded upon the notion of a continuous tradition of rightly guided believers that should form the basis for continued right belief and practice. The treatises were not intended as works of history (*taᵓrīkh*) or even of politics (*siyāsa*), still less as court etiquette (*ādāb*), and cannot be read as such. They *are* important evidence for Islamic theology and even 'constitutional law'[3] (albeit from an avowedly Sunni pietist perspective) in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, but are certainly not fully representative of the historical realities of the past to which they refer. The authors themselves acknowledged wider historical and political realities, but were specifically interested in discovering an unbroken line of legitimate (because ordained by God) Sunni legal practice from the time of the Prophet and the Medinan community onwards.

This can be illustrated through the treatment of the succession to al-Manṣūr in al-Māwardī's (d. 1058) 'Laws of Political Authority' (*al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya*). According to al-Māwardī, some scholars held that al-Manṣūr's removal in 764 of the *walī al-ᶜahd* ᶜĪsā b. Mūsā and his replacement of him with al-Mahdī *legally required* ᶜĪsā's voluntary abdication, on the basis that numerous jurists 'of the time' (*al-waqt*) had required this. Others asserted that the new caliph was always free to nominate whomever he pleased and that the voluntary abdication of ᶜĪsā was simply a political act, necessitated because 'it was the beginning of the dynasty and by the covenant (for ᶜĪsā) being so recent, by equality (of status) being evenly divided among (the Abbasids) and by their followers being nervous and worried'.[4] Either way, however, the Islamic past had to be explained within the framework of the legal system to which the scholars subscribed: those who accepted the legally binding force of the nomination of more than one *walī*

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al-ᶜahd pointed to the Prophet's appointment of an emir and two replacements for the raid against Muᵓta in 629 and only then invoked the fact of the precedent of the practice of many of the later caliphs which also supported their stance;[5] those who looked for only one nominee pointed to the practice of Abū Bakr in appointing ᶜUmar in 634 and invoked 'politics' as opposed to 'law' as the basis of al-Manṣūr's decision to have ᶜĪsā formally removed.[6]

The evolution of the rituals of Islamic monarchy

This book has taken an approach to the Islamic past that differs from that of the classical Sunni scholars in that it seeks to understand caliphal accession and succession in its evolving historical context. That is, it has taken not a theological–juristic approach to the past, which assumes a continuous tradition of 'right practice' that must be recovered, but a historical–anthropological one, which assumes that ideas about power and authority change and evolve over time and that diverse and competing claims to normative authority tend to be winnowed into established classical 'orthodoxies'. The primary obstacle in the way of this historical–anthropological approach is the nature of the source material. The evidence for the history of the first Muslim empire is late, and was often compiled by the jurists and scholars who built the foundations upon which the classical jurists then constructed their interpretations of the past. However, a number of strategies have helped to escape the predominantly late, 'traditionist' perspective of the later sources.

The first, formative decades of Islam are the least historically accessible because they have left behind so little primary source material. The written Islamic tradition began in the early-to-mid-eighth century and tended to take the life and conduct of the Prophet and the history of first Muslim polity as its starting-point. What the scholars tended to overlook as largely irrelevant was the 'pre-history' of Arabian sacral kingship and monotheist community. As a consequence, the political culture of very early Islam can be situated in its historical context only by looking outside the meagre evidence of the Arabic historical tradition. When the pre-Islamic history of Islam is restored, a fuller understanding of the political culture of the early polity emerges, as one that built upon established Arabian patterns of religious and political authority and upon the customs and practices of late antique communities of the pious.

The Qurᵓān is one of a few elements of the tradition that appear to be demonstrably early. Although much of the conventional interpretation of the Qurᵓān derives from the later Islamic tradition about the life and conduct of the Prophet and the history of the early Muslim polity, the Qurᵓān itself is important evidence for the early Muslims' understanding of religio-political power and authority. In

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the Qurʾān, as in other Near Eastern monotheist traditions, all relationships are based upon the covenant between Man and God. The quranic representation of covenant is also typical of Near Eastern monotheism in that it is modelled on the patterns of kingship, in which fulfilment of covenant (*wafāʾ al-ʿahd*) with a god or gods, like fulfilment of a covenant with a king, brought about blessings and rewards (*niʿam*) and violation of the same covenant led to material and spiritual punishment and perdition (*ʿadhāb*, *ihlāk*). What varied across different traditions and historical contexts was precisely how the covenant with God was contracted and how it was to be fulfilled – how the division of powers between 'king' and 'priest' and 'people' was worked out. In the material on the pledge of allegiance in the Qurʾān, Muḥammad stands as God's representative, through loyalty to whom God's blessings are to be received. This near-total fusion of prophetic and political leadership was enormously successful in uniting the Arabian tribes.

Much of subsequent Islamic history can be seen as the almost inevitable fracturing of this theoretical religio-political unity, as prophetic charisma underwent the routinization that was required to sustain a political community in the longer term. Indeed, the hectoring tone of some passages of the Qurʾān (not least those that specifically address the question of the pledge of allegiance) and their deference to the idea of 'right custom' (*maʿrūf*) suggest that Muḥammad sometimes struggled to make his theoretical claims a reality in the stateless, tribal society of early seventh-century Central Arabia. There is good evidence that the early caliphs continued to assert both spiritual and political authority with considerable success, but already at the time of the first civil war in 656–61 the reciprocal dimension of the covenant between the faithful and the caliph was invoked to justify resistance to the third caliph, ʿUthmān.

Under the Umayyads, the resources of late antique empire began to be diverted into the public legitimation of power, and so we can see Umayyad articulations of their legitimacy rather more clearly than we can those of earlier leaders. In the first decades of the eighth century, the Marwanids had developed a symbolic language of Islamic monarchy, expressed in court poetry, art, architecture and other material culture, and in the insignia of kingship. The same resources facilitated the establishment of dynastic succession, negotiated by the wider Umayyad patrimony and their allies and agreed under covenant. In the 730s and 740s, Marwanid court culture underwent what has been described as an increasing 'Iranisation' of its forms, and this was accompanied by the development of the written promulgation of caliphal legitimacy. However, the Marwanids' efforts to persuade provincial Muslim elites of their legitimacy were overtaken by the structural weaknesses of what was still in many respects a tribal, tributary monarchy.

The sudden transformation of caliphal ritual that took place in the early Abbasid period has some of its roots in the changes that took place in the latter

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decades of the Marwanid caliphate. Some of the most important court poets and scribes of the later Umayyad period passed directly into Abbasid service (for example, Abū Nukhayla, Ibn al-Muqaffaᶜ and Abū ᶜUbayd Allāh), and this helps to explain some of the specific continuities in the articulation of caliphal authority in poetry and prose. However, that the master of Arabic prose, ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd, did not survive the revolution is noteworthy – it was possible to have been too close to the former rulers – and those who did enter Abbasid service turned their skills to the expression of a very different rhetoric of Islamic legitimacy, in a very different political culture grounded in the establishment of a much more effective state apparatus.[7]

The power of the early Abbasids depended less upon tribal affiliation than upon the personal loyalty of the commanders of the revolutionary army, the personal clients of the caliph and the bureaucracy of scribes and lawyers. From 762 to 796 – the high point of Abbasid territorial domination – this cosmopolitan ruling elite was gathered at the single imperial capital at Madīnat al-Salām. An elaborate ceremonial that denoted proximity to the person of caliph became the means through which status and authority were publicly communicated. At the rituals of accession and succession these hierarchies were reflected in the division of the ceremony between two or even three locations in the palace and the mosque. Arabian tribal customs of consultative leadership had been transformed into a theatre of universal imperial monarchy.

Influences from across the former Sasanian empire shaped the staging of this theatre. Many of those brought to the centre of the Muslim state by the patronage of the Abbasid caliphs were from a broadly Iranian cultural background. The middle and later decades of the eighth century was the period in which the caliphs' interest in Greek, Pahlavi and other non-Arabic traditions developed rapidly. Aside from the physical forms of elite imperial culture, the institutions of imperial power also reflected the post-Sasanian milieu. The appointment of members of the ruling dynasty to important provincial governorships, the caliphal *majālis* and the *maẓālim* court, the expansion of the *dīwān*s and of courtiers' offices all recall Sasanian precedents. In the emergence of what might be called the 'court historiography' of the early Abbasid period – in which narratives of accession and succession were manipulated to legitimatory effect – one might see echoes of the Paikuli inscription's function as a textual assertion of royal legitimacy.

However, the Abbasid caliphs' claims to personal authority over the empire were also grounded in Arabian monotheism, and so the articulation of their legitimacy was shaped not only by expectations of universal monarchy rooted in Iranian culture, but also by evolving ideas about religious authority. Like the Umayyads, the Abbasids were the inheritors of the spiritual and political

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authority of the Prophet Muḥammad and the monotheist prophets and patriarchs that had preceded him. However, the proto-Shi^{c}ite ideology of the revolution placed a much greater emphasis on the Prophet as the archetype for legitimate authority, and this exerted a decisive influence on the symbolic expression of Abbasid legitimacy. Associations between the *ḥajj* rituals (which had long been associated with the caliphate in general and the succession in particular) and the first pledges of allegiance taken in or near Mecca by the Prophet at al-^{c}Aqaba and al-Ḥudaybiya appear to have been seized upon by the Abbasids. The prominence of al-^{c}Abbās, the Prophet's uncle, progenitor of the Abbasids and notional true inheritor of Muḥammad's authority, in the traditions about these and other events is probably largely a product of early Abbasid influence. The pledge of allegiance itself also appears to have been more explicitly connected to the pledge of allegiance of the Prophet – the *bay^{c}a riḍwān* was at once the oath of the Muslims to the caliph and the quranic oath now often associated with the story of al-Ḥudaybiya; one suspects that the symbolic resonances of the emblems of ancient Near Eastern royal power – the staff, signet ring and cloak – also became more exclusively Prophetic.

The nature of the Muslim polity was also changing decisively. By 750 the formative events of the mid-seventh century were entirely a matter of historical rather than living memory. Furthermore, the Arabian empire was becoming a more Muslim empire, in that conversion to Islam, prompted not least by the Abbasid Revolution itself, was beginning to transform both the ethnic exclusivity of Muslim identity and the religious identity of those indigenous elites who participated in imperial politics. In the rituals of accession and succession, the impact of this evolution of the Arabic–Islamic tradition can be seen in the texts of documentary materials used in legitimating and managing the succession. The elaborate legalistic prose of the dispositive documents of 776 and 802/5 parallel contemporaneous developments in commercial contracts, to which they are analogous in many respects.

Muslim monarchy and the Islamic commonwealth

For all that the first Abbasids succeeded in developing a fully articulated claim to Islamic universal monarchy, they failed to maintain centralised power over the Muslim empire. Spain was lost immediately, and most of North Africa was independent from the later eighth century. In the central Islamic lands, provincial aspirations towards greater independence from Iraqi domination were often expressed through bids for control over the caliphate; it is notable that al-Mahdī developed not only Rayy/al-Muḥammadiyya in the Jibāl, but also al-Raqqa, in the Jazīra. Hārūn al-Rashīd and then his son al-Ma$^{\circ}$mūn went further – both

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established caliphal capitals in the frontier regions that had backed their successful attempts to take power. Viewed in this perspective, Hārūn al-Rashīd's famous 'Meccan Settlement' in 802 (and its revision at Qarmāsīn in 805) appear to have been an attempt to broker a deal between Khurasan and Iraq that ultimately failed.

In the ninth century, the decline of direct control over many of the provinces and the centralisation of the caliph's military power in Iraq brought about important changes in the ritual of accession and succession. Without provincial elites to make bids for power at a centre now dominated by the leaders of the centralised caliphal field army, the *wilāyat al-ᶜahd* ceased to be the usual means of organising the caliphal succession. Instead, the new caliph tended to be proclaimed by the ruling clique of military commanders, who managed the rituals of his acclamation as caliph (*taslīm bi'l-khilāfa*) and the giving of the pledge of allegiance (*bayᶜa*) by the army. The reign of al-Mutawakkil and his vizier ᶜUbayd Allāh b. Khāqān stands out as the exception from this pattern because ᶜUbayd Allāh attempted to use a return to the covenant for the succession to exacerbate divisions within the army to his own advantage. However, the attempt proved to be the trigger for a second ninth-century civil war that created further expressions of provincial autonomy – either as independent Shiᶜite states, or as provinces notionally loyal to the caliph but independent of his power.

What was left behind as Abbasid imperial power declined and then collapsed was a commonwealth of Muslim elites – both ruling military dynasties and urban 'patriciates' of landowners, merchants and scholars – among whom the 'Book and Sunna' were the immutable sacred texts through which the structures of power were interpreted and legitimated.[8] The mid-to-late ninth century, where this book ends, was the great era of the compilation of the canonical works of *ḥadīth* scholarship among 'traditionist' scholars (*ahl al-sunna*) in which the 'Sunna' was reified as a single, albeit vast, written corpus. With the occultation of the last Shiᶜite imam in the late ninth century and his 'greater occultation' after *c*. 940, the 'Twelver' Shiᶜites also arrived at a similar formulation of scriptural authority. In these canonical texts, a fusion of Arabian custom (much of it deployed in the distinctive vision of the Prophet Muḥammad) and post-Roman and post-Sasanian cultural practice, much of which was of great antiquity, was sacralised as Islamic.

The evolution of the contract and vow formulas deployed at the inaugural rituals of the caliphs reflects this wider process of assimilation and canonisation. The classical *bayᶜa* developed from the tribal custom of the Arabian Peninsula into a religio-political contract that was customarily expressed in the hierarchic rituals of the royal court and in the idiomatic prose of the *dīwān al-inshāᵓ*. More important, from a classical Sunni perspective, it came to be understood

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in theoretical terms that were both contractual and explicitly commercial and were influenced by pre-Islamic Iraqi traditions of contract law. Through quranic citation this contract was explicitly linked to the pledges taken by the Prophet Muḥammad.

A similar process can be detected in the physical emblems of the caliphate: the seal, staff (or, increasingly, after Sasanian practice, the *qaḍīb*, or 'sceptre')[9] and mantle had become relics of the Prophet. Although the decisive shift in their symbolic status should probably be located, like so much else, in the Hashimite basis of the Abbasid Revolution, the evolution in their symbolic resonances was gradual.[10] It is notable that it was only in 858–9 that the *ʿanaza*, or short spear, said to have been given to the Prophet Muḥammad by the Negus of Aksum, was introduced into caliphal ceremonial, after it had been presented to al-Mutawakkil.[11] The traditions about the Prophet's *ʿanaza* probably long pre-dated this event, but it was in the mid-ninth century that a caliph seeking escape from the domination of his Turkish army and new foundations for his legitimacy added the Prophet's spear of the tradition to the *ḥarba* traditionally carried before the ruler.

However, when we turn to the collections of the Sunna themselves, what is perhaps most notable is their comparatively limited concern with the ritual of the *bayʿa* to the caliph *per se*; the relevant material is found under the rubrics of 'vows', 'gifts', 'holy war' and gender taboos – whether the Prophet touched women in accepting their allegiance (the consensus was that he did not) was a question that generated a large number of traditions about the *bayʿa*. This focus on social and religious practice is a function of the evolution and composition of much of the Sunna outside the direct influence of royal power; pledges and vows in non-monarchic contexts – notably to local imams and teachers – were more important than the remote ceremonial of monarchs and their armies.[12] The same silence also serves as a warning against accepting the classical jurisprudents' restrictive assessment of caliphal legitimacy, especially for earlier periods. As we have seen, in late antiquity and early Islam, monarchy had its own symbolic vocabulary of divinely sanctioned power. A division of sacred authority was always immanent in the covenant between God's caliph and God's people, but it was in contention for centuries. The idea of the caliph as the representative of God's covenant on earth, from whom other monarchic authority was delegated, would never entirely lose its potency.

NOTES

1. Crone, *Political Thought*, 39, 222–3.
2. On the works of al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013), al-Māwardī (d. 1058) and their successors, see Crone, *Political Thought*, 222–3. For contractual analogies for the *bayʿa*, see al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 179, 180; al-Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, 4–5.

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3. Crone, *Political Thought*, 223.
4. al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām*, 11.
5. al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām*, 10–11.
6. al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām*, 7, 11.
7. On the death of ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd, see the forthcoming Robinson, 'Violence'.
8. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 9, 40ff. On the 'patriciate', see Bulliet, *Patricians*.
9. Sauvaget, *La Mosquée*, 131; Grabar, 'Ceremonial and art', 58.
10. For other relics and insignia, see Bal., iii, 158–9.
11. Ṭab., iii, 1437.
12. That the *bayᶜa* was also taken to Ṣūfī sheikhs, who, like caliphs, bestowed blessings and crowns, reflects the diffusion of sacerdotal power in classical Islam: Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 234; Pinto, *Piri-Muridi Relationship*, 267ff.

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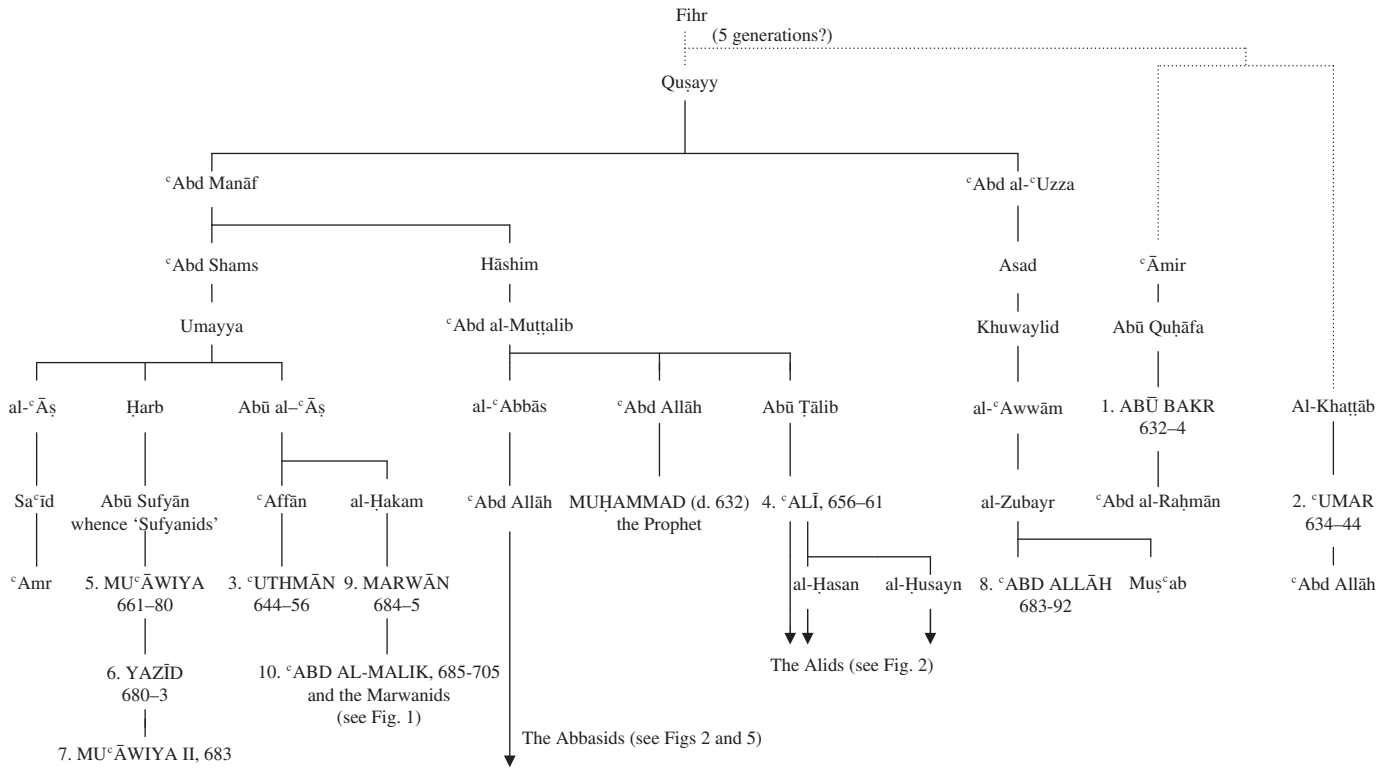


Fig. 4 Genealogical table of Quraysh (showing Muḥammad and the seventh-century caliphs in capitals with regnal years; the sequence of caliphs is numbered).

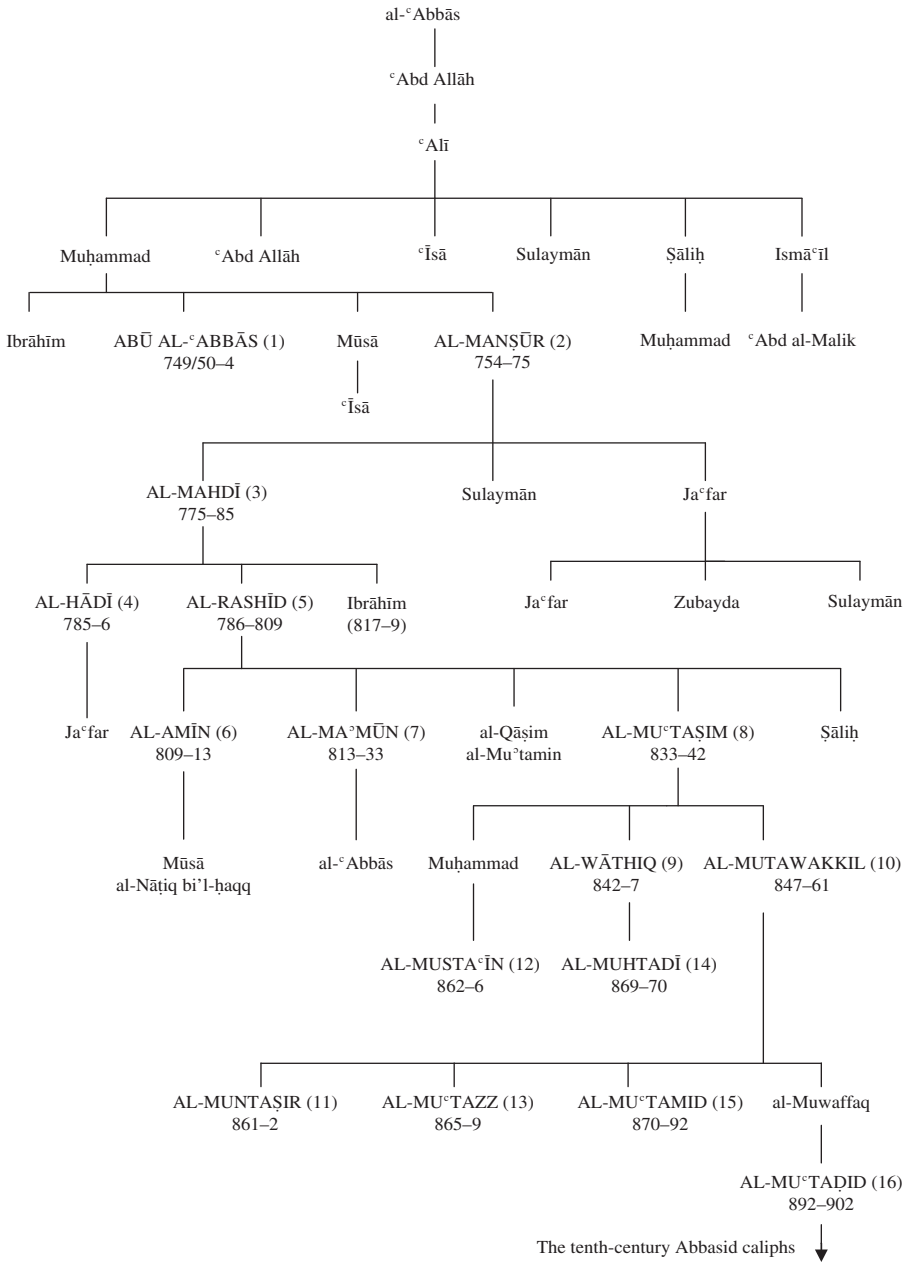


Fig. 5 Genealogical table of the Abbasid caliphs in the eighth and ninth centuries (caliphs appear in capitals with their regnal years; the numbers in parentheses indicate the sequence of their reigns).

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	M. F. ʿAbd al-Bāqī, *Muʿjam al-mufahras li-alfāẓ al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, Cairo 1945.
ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman, New York 1992.
Agh.	Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, Cairo 1924–74 (pagination from the Būlāq 1285/1868 edn).
Azr.	al-Khuzāʿī/al-Azraqī, *Kitāb Akhbār Makka*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Leipzig 1858.
Bal.	al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. ʿA. ʿA al-Dūrī, I. ʿAbbās, R. Baʿalbakī, 'al-Nasharāt al-Islāmiyya/Bibliotheca Islamica 28c-h', ed. S. Wild and U. Haarman, vols iii–v, vii/1–2, Beirut and Wiesbaden/Berlin, 1979–2002.
Bal.(C)	al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. M. Ḥamīd Allāh, 'Dhakhāʾir al-ʿarab 27', vol. i, Cairo 1959.
Bal.(D)	al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. M. al-Fardūs al-ʿAẓm, Damascus 1997–2004.
Bal.(J)	al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. K. Athamina, vol. vib, Jerusalem 1993.
BASIC	I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Washington 1995.
CHI	*The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. W. B. Fisher et al., Cambridge 1968–91.
CIH	*Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum pars quarta inscriptiones ḥimyariticas et sebaeas continens* t. I–III Paris 1889–1929.
Din.	al-Dīnawarī, *Kitāb al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, ed. V. Guirgass, Leiden 1888.
EAC	N. Lowick, *Early Abbasid Coinage: A Type Corpus 132–218 H/AD 750–833*, unpublished, 1999.
EAL	*Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. J. S. Meisami and P. Starkey, London 1998.
EI²	*The Encyclopaedia of Islam: New Edition*, ed. B. Lewis et al., Leiden 1954–2005.
E.Ir.	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, 13 vols, London 1983–present.
EQ	*The Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. J. D. McAuliffe, Leiden 2001–6.

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Far.	al-Farazdaq, *Dīwān al-Farazdaq*, ed. and tr. R. Boucher, Paris 1870.
Far.[1]	al-Farazdaq, *Dīwān al-Farazdaq*, ed. J. Hell, Munich 1901.
IAṬ	Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb al-Manẓūm wa'l-manthūr*, MS British Museum Add. 18532.
IH	Ibn Hishām/Ibn Isḥāq, *Kitāb Sīrat rasūl Allāh*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen 1858–60.
IS	Ibn Saᶜd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā li-Ibn Saᶜd*, ed. I. ᶜAbbās, Beirut 1957–68.
Jah.	al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarāʾ wa'l-kuttāb*, ed. M. al-Saqā et al., Cairo 1938.
Khal.	Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ al-Uṣfurī, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. A. Ḍ. al-ᶜUmarī, 2nd edn, Beirut 1977.
Lane	E. W. Lane, *An Arabic English Lexicon*, London 1863–93.
Lisān	Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ᶜArab al-muḥīṭ*, Beirut 1970.
Mas.	al-Masᶜūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-madāʾin al-jawhar*, ed. B. de Maynard, P. de Courteille and C. Pellat, Beirut 1966–79 (with 1871–7 Paris pagination).
ODB	*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. P. Kazhdan et al., 3 vols, Oxford 1991.
Qal.	al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜshā fī ṣināᶜat al-inshā*, ed. M. ᶜA. Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1913–20.
Ṣaf.	A. Z. Ṣafwat, *Jamharat rasāʾil al-ᶜarab*, 2nd edn, Cairo 1971.
Ṣaf.[1]	A. Z. Ṣafwat, *Jamharat rasāʾil al-ᶜarab*, 1st edn, Cairo 1937.
Ṭab.	al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Leiden 1870–1901.
Ṭab.(C)	al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, ed. M. A. al-F. Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1961–9.
ᶜUyūn	Anon., *Kitāb al-ᶜUyūn wa'l-ḥadāʾiq fī akhbār al-ḥaqāʾiq*, ed. M. J. de Geoje and P. de Jong, Leiden 1869.
Waq.	al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī li'l-Wāqidī*, ed. M. Jones, Oxford 1966.
Yaq.	al-Yaᶜqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. M. Houtsma, Leiden 1883.

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